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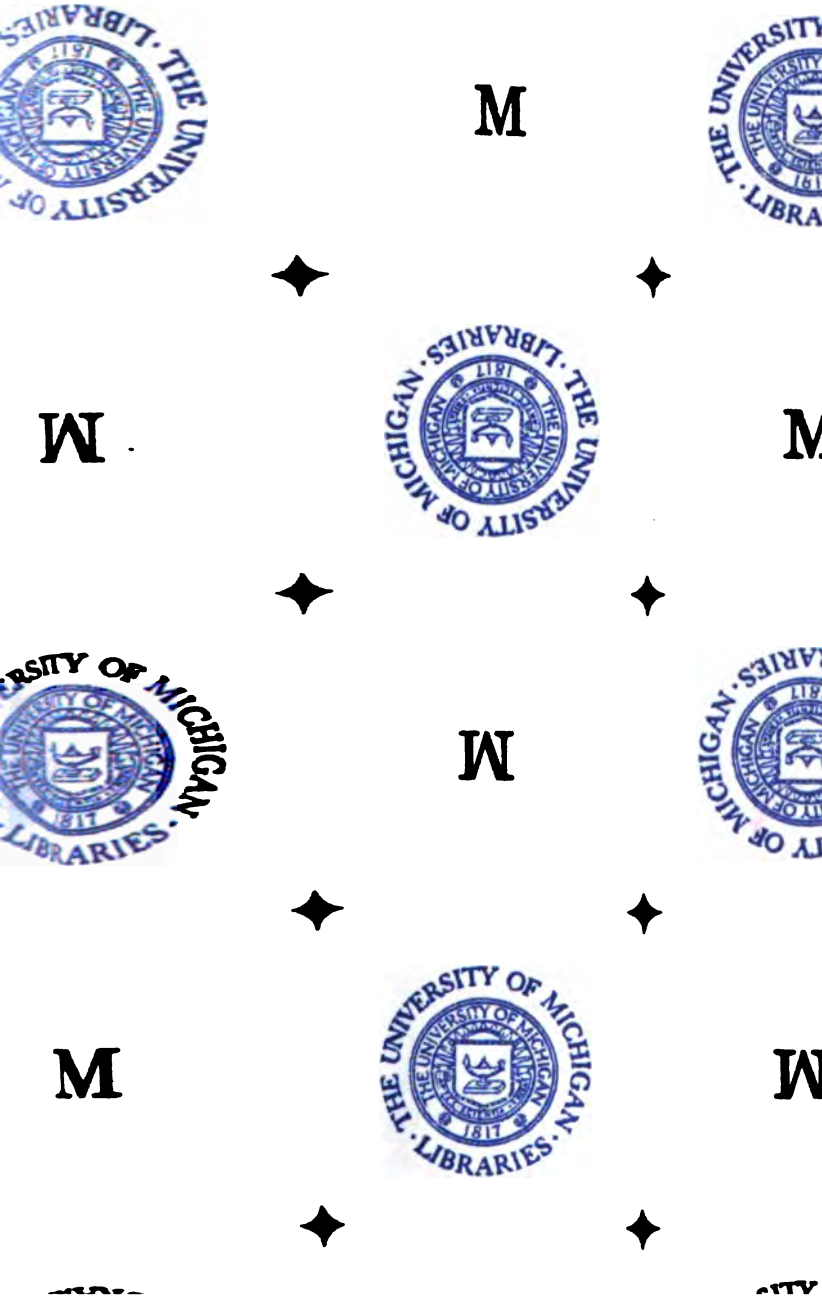
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AUGUST STRINDBERG

AUGUST STRINDBERG

BUST BY CARL ELDH

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AUGUST STRINDBERG

THE SPIRIT OF REVOLT

Studies and Impressions

BY

L. LIND-AF-HAGEBY

NEW YORK
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AUGUST STRINDBERG

THE SPIRIT OF REVOLT

INTRODUCTION

THE RIDDLE

THERE have been few dispassionate attempts to discern August Strindberg's place in contemporary literature. His writings and his personality defied ordinary criticism.

He took upon himself the rôle of destroyer, he mocked men's religion and men's morality, he ridiculed propriety and poured bitter scorn on the social order. There was something cometic in the swiftness and intensity with which he appeared, disturbing the well-ordered orbits of traditions and conventions. The erratic course of his voyage through humanity caused alarm. No sooner had people congratulated themselves that his terrific lust for destruction had passed by their favourite systems and their cherished ideals, than his

ruthless force was upon them, exposing ugliness and scattering treasures.

He passed on, making enemies, breaking idols, desecrating temples. He sowed reality and he reaped hatred.

His titanic spirit worked through a brain charged with explosive mentality. He poured out dramas, novels, stories, with a versatility and an accumulating energy which in themselves were offensive to the mediocre and to those who sought to place him within literary shackles. He discoursed on history, science and statecraft with the calm assurance of omniscience.

He wrote books which were decidedly and unblushingly "immoral." He compelled attention by blasphemous outbursts which filled the religious with righteous indignation and sighs for the *auto-da-fé*. He dissected the human heart, laid bare its meanness, its uncleanliness; made men and women turn on each other with sudden understanding and loathing, and walked away smiling at the evil he had wrought. He turned on himself with savage hatred, and in books, bearing the mark of the flagellant and reflecting the agony of a soul in torment, he pointed to his sins and his stripes.

"He is very evil," said some; "let us put him in prison."

"He is mad," said others; "let us have him declared a lunatic."

"He is most improper," said the majority; "let us ignore him altogether."

When public opinion was quite sure that Strindberg was evil, mad, and improper, when he stood convicted out of his own mouth of anti-social and satanic designs, he stayed the verdict by his own magic. He wrote more and more, and there came from his pen artistic creations endowed with virtues which could not have risen in a mind submerged in vice; pictures of scenery which bespoke a delicate and spiritualised nature-worship. His mind held a garden of flowers as well as a pile of putrescence.

On May 14th, 1912, the stillness of death descended on the battlefield which was Strindberg's life. The literary historian who justly passes the suspended verdict must hold peculiar and special qualifications. For the winds of literary taste and fashion cannot touch the giant of expression. Condemnation by temporary systems of morality and creed did not alter his course in life and will not disturb him in death. He was—himself; and

he worked ceaselessly at the task of finding more of himself. Strindberg the atheist, Strindberg the scientist, Strindberg the spiritualist, Strindberg the mystic, Strindberg the sensualist, and Strindberg the ascetic, took equally important parts in his theatre of life. The critic met him day by day in different attire and pose, incarnations of the elusive self which was stage-manager of this extraordinary performance. A soul in conflict with itself, good and evil, fair and foul; sparkling with life and tense with passion to create, he could not give us peace or contentment. Like Jacob, he wrestled with God, though not for a night only, but throughout life, and he fought with the desperation of one who knows that upon the issue of the struggle depends, not his own blessing, but the liberation of countless prisoners.

An epitome of humanity, a fragment of the world's eternal and real drama of birth and death, he cannot be fully understood save by those who share his cosmic consciousness.

He studied chemistry, astronomy, botany, physics, geology, entomology, medicine, philology and political economy with a voracity which made him ridiculous in the eyes of the specialists who are satisfied with a few well-

established formulæ. For him there were no barriers between specialised departments of human knowledge—all sciences were thrown into the melting-pot, in which he was preparing the new brew which would slake the thirst of parched souls. A solipsist who assimilated, rejected and transmuted the patiently accumulated theories of morals as the supreme duty of existence, he scorned the slaves of ethical communism.

The iconoclasm of Ibsen was fired by the realisation of the duties of the wise prophet amongst his foolish people. The hypocrisies and foibles of the little souls were the objects of the thundering chastisement of his trumpet. The white heat of Nietzsche's forge for the making of Superman was engendered by contempt for the feeble and sickly. The misanthropy which breathed poison out of Strindberg's writings, which showed souls and things in hideous nakedness, and painted sores and disease with horrible realism, was the darkness which he held high so as to call forth the cry for light.

The collected works of Strindberg, which will shortly be published in a new edition, consist of some 115 plays, novels, collections of stories, essays and poems. Amongst these

some seem absolutely antithetical. It is the constant changeability, the self-contradictions, which made Strindberg so incomprehensible to his contemporaries. The measure of his life-force was so liberal that he could afford to continue where others stop. He shed his skins like the snake and altered his colour like the chameleon, because he was the personification of perpetual movement and change. Thus he was endowed with ever-recurring youth; the decay of the old was immediately followed by birth of the new. The diary, in which, during the last fourteen years, he recorded his visions and supernatural experiences, will not be given to the world for many years to come. Though it depicts the last phase of his spiritual evolution, the postponement of publication is no doubt wise. Meanwhile, those who have poured curses on Strindberg's blatant atheism have been perplexed by his last words.

When death was drawing near, he took the Bible—which always lay on the table by his bed—held it up and said in a clear voice:

"Everything personal is now obliterated. I have settled with life. My account has been rendered. This alone is right."

He expressed a last wish that the Bible and

a little crucifix which he used to wear should be placed on his breast after death, and that he should be buried early in the morning, and not amongst the rich. He desired to be laid to rest alone on the top of a hill under the firs.

This love of the early morning was part of his craving for more light. For many years he used to take a solitary morning walk. At seven o'clock he emerged from his "blue tower" in Stockholm and walked briskly through the streets and squares of his native town. At nine he was back at his writing-table—of late years a recluse for the rest of the day, absorbed in his work.

"Ever since my youth," he writes in *Inferno*, "I devote my morning walk to meditations which are preparations for my daily work. Nobody may then accompany me, not even my wife. In the morning my mind enjoys a balance and an expansion which approach ecstasy; I do not walk, I fly; I do not feel that I have a body; all sadness evaporates and I am entirely soul. This is for me the hour of inner concentration, of prayer, my divine service."

I have often seen Strindberg in the streets of Stockholm. He walked with his high fore-

head painfully contracted, the eyes searching and concentrated, and an expression of haughty bitterness upon his face. A solitary, suggesting to the passer-by Rodin's *Penseur* in motion and the futile wanderings of Ahasuerus; he seemed wrapped in his own misery, held aloof by suffering and contempt.

One day I met him with a companion. He was holding a little girl by the hand and talking to her. The child looked up in his face and Strindberg's expression was changed. Love for the child, respect for the questions and joys of childhood shone out of the face of the hater. He was not obsessed by the ugliness of things or the cruelty of human deception. His face was aglow with the early enthusiasm which, though slain a thousand times, rises again at the bidding of the Self that knows the answer to the riddle.

In the early morning of Sunday, May 19th, August Strindberg's body was laid to rest. It was a glorious spring day with sunshine and blue sky. Some sixty thousand people were astir to do homage to the memory of one whom they knew to have been intrinsically true and tragically great. Royalty, Riksdag, universities, capital and labour, statesmen, writers and artists assembled to say a

united farewell to the man of mystery who, by his intense sincerity and the exuberance of genius, had at last melted hatred, and ascended the steps from shame to glory.

In a message after Strindberg's death, Maxim Gorki likened him to Danko, the hero of the old Danube legend, who, in order to help humanity out of the darkness of problems, tore his heart out of his breast, lit it and holding it high, led the way. The masses who mock and praise so easily, who crucify and raise idols with the same haste, seldom recognise their real friends. Strindberg patiently burnt his heart for the illumination of the people, and on the day when his body was laid low in the soil the flame of his self-immolation was seen pure and inextinguishable.

CHAPTER I

THE STRUGGLE WITH ENVIRONMENT

STRINDBERG'S childhood and youth, as described by himself in his autobiographical novel *The Bondswoman's Son*, present psychological features of exceptional interest. The circumstances of his early home-life and their effect upon the unfolding forces of his genius cannot be ignored by anyone who attempts to explain the varied strata of his artistic production.

His insistent and torturous need for exact self-analysis, coupled with an equally compelling need to tell the truth, made all his writings strongly subjective. His autobiography—"the story of a soul's evolution"—is an intimate revelation of his power to dissect his past selves, to record minute incidents and to extract reflexes from the bundle of emotions and thoughts which go to make up character. Nothing is lost, nothing is too insignificant for careful examination in the

microscope under which he places every cell of himself. The confessions of Rousseau and Tolstoy have not the nakedness of Strindberg's truth about himself. Though he never loses sympathy with himself, he scorns excuses and exposes his sins and his follies with ruthless exactitude. There is a strange combination of the coolly analysing psychologist and the passionate flagellant in the descriptions which range from the struggles of childhood, through the Inferno-period of 1896, to the calm of *Alone*, and the final visions of light.

The autobiographical novel in four volumes which was published under the titles *The Bondswoman's Son*, *Fermentation Time*, *In the Red Room* and *The Author*, was written at the age of thirty-seven, and, though the impressions of childhood are recorded with deep insight into the child's mind, we cannot forget that they were written down and interpreted by the man who had behind him years of tumultuous and bitter struggle for self-expression, and before whom the banquet of life seemed reduced to dead-sea fruit. In the preface to the fifth edition of *The Bondswoman's Son*, he tells us that when writing the volume he believed he stood before death,

" for I was tired, saw no longer any object in life, considered myself superfluous, thrown away."

Johan August Strindberg was born in Stockholm on January 22nd, 1849. His father, whom in disparagement of his parentage he often calls " the grocer," was a merchant and shipping agent who had married a servant-girl, the mother of his three children. The father was a man of education and natural refinement who passed through many economical vicissitudes, culminating in bankruptcy at the time of August's birth. August was born a short time after the union between the parents had been legalised by the ceremony of marriage, and he was not welcome. His father bore his troubles with manly fortitude and resignation and cherished the ideals of the upper classes, whilst the mother was essentially of the people and remained so. He claimed a distant ancestral connection with the nobility of Sweden, his family having descended from the son of a peasant who was born in 1710 at Strinne in Ångermanland, and who married a girl of noble birth. The discord resulting from the difference between his father and mother gave August his

first impression of that class struggle which throughout life held him in the bondage of a haunting problem, and which stimulated the development of his mordantly critical faculties.

Poverty, with its attendant cares and anxieties, reigned in the house by Klara churchyard, where, from a flat on the third floor, August began to survey life's difficulties. He tells us that he recollects fear and hunger as his first sensations. He was afraid of darkness, of being beaten, of offending people, of falling down, of knocking against things, of being in the way, of the fists of his brothers, of father's and mother's chastisements.

It was not easy to avoid being in people's way, for the parents with seven children and two servants lived in three rooms. The furniture consisted mostly of cradles and beds; children slept on ironing boards and chairs. Baptisms and funerals alternated. The mother developed phthisis after the birth of her twelfth child.

She was contented with her life, he tells us, for she had risen in the social scale and improved her own and her family's position. The father was less satisfied with his fate, for he had descended and sacrificed himself. He

was tired, sad, severe and serious, but not hard.

Strindberg's recollections of his early impressions of the relations between his father and mother show the inception of the views on women and marriage which earned for him the title of woman-hater, and which found their most provocative expression in *The Father* and *The Confession of a Fool.*

"This is the father's thankless position in the family," he writes; "to be everybody's breadwinner, everybody's enemy." He concluded that his mother did not overwork herself, though his account of the daily life in the family does not support that view.

As a little boy August was as weak as other little boys. He adored his mother. He was shy, acutely sensitive, morbidly self-conscious, keenly resentful of injustice. He was not his mother's favourite, he was nobody's favourite, and this embittered him. The mother soon became an object of analysis; he was torn between love for her and contempt for her faults, which he discovered through making comparisons between her and his father. He says that a yearning for the mother followed him through life. The future misogynist was fostered by the child's passionate

and unrequited love for the mother. When in later life Strindberg's attacks upon women were criticised, he defended himself by declaring that he chid woman because he loved her so well.

Disgust with the daily drudgery and routine of the household was aroused at an early age. He speaks of the family as an institution for providing food and clean clothes, where there is an eternal round of shopping, cooking, cleaning and washing.

"Glorious moral institution," he cries; "holy family, inviolable, divine institution for the education of citizens in truth and virtue! Thou pretended home of virtues, where innocent children are tortured to speak their first lie, where will-power is crushed by despotism, where self-reliance is killed by narrow egoism. Family, thou art the home of all social vices, the charitable institution for all lazy women. The forge for the chains of the breadwinner, and the hell of the children!"

This passage follows the description of an unjust punishment which was meted out to August. He was accused of having drunk some wine out of his aunt's bottle, and upon blushing in response to his father's question

was beaten as the culprit. Fear of the physical pain made him confess the deed which he had never committed, and, upon telling his old nurse that he had suffered innocently, he was again seized and now beaten as a liar as well as a thief. After that day he lived in constant anxiety. The world was a cruel and unfriendly place; there were enemies everywhere.

"Who drank that wine?" he repeatedly asked himself. The search for a satisfactory reply to that question and to similar questions was not abandoned, though it was futile. The hostility to social injustice and enforced criminality to which, later on, he gave literary utterance, had a remote though ineffaceable connection with the abducted contents of the wine bottle.

His ideas about God were vague, and chiefly formulated through saying daily the Swedish child's prayer: "God who loveth children." The windows of the house overlooked the old churchyard of Klara. When there was a fire in the night the church bells were tolled in a manner which struck horror in the heart of the child. The whole household was awake. "There is a fire," ran the whisper. He cried and tried in vain to go to

sleep again. Then his mother came, tucked him up and said: "Don't be afraid; God will protect those who are unhappy." The following morning the servants read in the paper that there had been a fire, and that two people had been burnt to death.

"That was God's will," said his mother. Such incidents did not pass him by. The apparent inconsistency between the expectation of faith and the tragic reality troubled him and caused his first religious doubts.

The old church with its graves became the symbol of gloom, and of the joyless fate from which there is no escape. During the cholera epidemic of 1854 the child of five watched the paraphernalia and ceremonies of death from the bedroom window. In the churchyard below, gravediggers were at work, stretchers were carried past, dark knots of people were seen to assemble round black boxes. The church bells tolled incessantly.

One day his uncle took him and his brothers inside the church. In spite of the beautiful walls in white and gold, the sound of the music which was like that of a hundred pianos, and kneeling white angels, his attention was riveted on two figures. Amidst the praying congregation two prisoners in chains were

doing penance. They were guarded by soldiers and clad in long, grey cloaks with hoods over their heads.

He was told that these men were thieves. A feeling of oppression by something horrible, by an incomprehensibly cruel and relentless force, overcame August, and he was glad to be taken away.

The initiation into the existence of pain and suffering which awaits every child held peculiar terrors for him. Acutely sensitive, his nerves of sympathy responded quickly to the feelings of others. One day he was taken to the workhouse infirmary to visit his wet-nurse who was slowly dying. The old women with their diseases, pale, lame and sorrowing, the long row of beds, the colourless monotony of the ward and its unpleasant odours fixed themselves in his consciousness. When he left he was haunted by a strange sense of unpaid and unpayable debt. For this was the woman who had fed him, whose blood had nourished his. Through poverty she had been forced to give him that which rightfully belonged to her own child. August felt vaguely that he was enjoying stolen life, and he was ashamed of his relief at being taken away from the sights of the sick-room.

When August was seven the family moved to a larger house. The worst days of penury were now over, and, though strict economy had to be practised and every luxury eschewed, there was more freedom from anxiety for the daily bread. His mind had hitherto been fed by daily portions of Kindergarten fare. He was now sent to Klara school for boys, where his sense of the general injustice of things was rapidly developed through the vigour with which the headmaster wielded his cane.

He was awakened at six during the dark winter mornings, and as his home was now far from Klara he had to trudge a long way through deep snow, and arrived at his destination in wet boots and knickerbockers. When late he was paralysed with fright in anticipation of the headmaster's morning exercise on those who were unpunctual. He heard the screams of boys who were already in the clutches of the tyrant.

One morning he was saved by the kindly charwoman, who pleaded for him and pointed out that he had a long way to walk. It is a pity that the charwoman who saved Strindberg from a thrashing has not been given a niche in his gallery of women.

August did not shine in this school, though his knowledge was in advance of his years, and he had, therefore, been admitted before the required age. He was the youngest at school and at home, a position which he vainly resented. This was a school for the children of the upper middle class. August wore knickerbockers of leather, and strong coarse boots, which smelt of blubber and blacking. The boys in velvet blouses avoided him. He observed that the badly dressed boys were more severely beaten than the well-dressed ones, and that nice-looking boys escaped altogether.

Strindberg records his early experiences at school with characteristic vehemence :

" . . . It was regarded as a preparation for hell and not for life ; the teachers seemed to exist in order to torment, not to punish. All life weighed like an oppressive nightmare, in which it was of no avail to have known one's lessons when one left home. Life was a place for punishing crimes committed before one was born, and therefore the child walked about with a permanently bad conscience."

At the age of nine he fell in love for the first time. A roseate shimmer descended over the cane and the Latin grammar through

the presence in the class-room of the head-master's little daughter. She was placed at the back of the room, and the boys were forbidden to look at her. "She was probably ugly," he tells us with his usual realism where love affairs are concerned, "but she was nicely dressed." During the French lessons her soft voice rang out above the grating sound of the boys' answers, and even the hard visage of the teacher melted when he spoke to her.

August never had the courage to speak to her. His love expressed itself in gentle melancholy and vague wishes. He felt the victim of a secret within his own breast and suffered from it. The affair ended with a frustrated suicidal intention, but the lover did not attain to peace. His love affairs from the first to the last were tinged with tragedy, and were the vehicles of his restless and futile search for harmony.

The house in the north of Stockholm, to which the family had moved, had a large garden and adjoining fields. The father loved the country, and farming operations on a small scale were part of the daily duties. The boys were made to work in the garden, and were thus provided with healthy exercise. A mag-

nificent old oak and bowers of lilac and jessamine made the old-fashioned garden beautiful. August's bitter experience of canes, teachers and unattainable feminine charm did not corrode his inborn love of nature, which remained a source of mental and physical rejuvenation when others ran dry.

The deep blackness of the freshly tilled soil, the apple trees in their blossoming glory, the tulips in their gorgeous garb called forth aspirations in his mind which responded to no human voice. The boy walking in the garden was filled with a solemnity which neither school nor church could inspire.

A summer holiday spent at Drottningholm, amidst the smiling islands and wooded shores of the Lake of Mälar, had accentuated his disgust with the ugly things which abound in towns.

Stockholm's Skärgård, the archipelago which guards the fair capital of Sweden, and which is the pride of every true child of Stockholm, became his favourite scenery in later years.

There is something primæval and suggestive of the creation of the world in these thousands of rocks and islands which rise in ever-varying form and colour from the

blue depths of the Baltic. The keen salt breezes which sweep round the bare and uninhabitable rocks whisper of a no-man's land, where the soul is tossed by elements neither friendly nor hostile, but restful. Through the white stems of the birches, the deep red of the cottages and the evergreen storm-bent fir trees, the islands on which the poor fisherfolk live and labour, salute the passing mariner by a trichromatic call to the simple life.

Upon this world the youthful Strindberg gazed one day. He had walked through a deep forest, and crept through whortleberries and juniper to the top of a steep rock. The picture of islands and fjords which lay spread before his eyes caused him to "shiver with delight."

That picture, he writes, impressed him as if he had recovered a land seen in beautiful dreams, or in a former life.

He hid from his comrades; he could not follow them.

"This was his scenery, the true milieu of his nature, idylls, poor rugged rocks, covered with pine forest, thrown out on wide stormy fjords with the immense sea as a distant background. He remained true to this love . . . and neither the Alps of Switzerland, the

olive-clad hills of the Mediterranean, nor the cliffs of Normandy could oust this rival."

Love of nature did not curb August's high spirits in childhood. At the age of ten he played wild games, climbed trees, slid down mountains on pieces of wood, robbed birds' nests and shot their innocent owners. He rode bareback, could swim, sail a boat and handle a gun.

During a summer holiday August and his brothers were sent as boarders to the house of a sexton. It was the father's wish that his sons should share in the work on the farm as well as prepare for the winter's schooling. In the sexton's kitchen August saw the wafers prepared and stamped for Holy Communion. He mischievously ate them and reflected that there was not much in the Sacrament. He broke covenant with his host by rushing into the church, turning the hour-glass on the pulpit, and delivering a sermon. He ran through the church on the backs of the pews and threw over the reading-desk, on which the hymn-book lay. The disjointed pieces of the desk frightened him and reminded him of possible consequences. Yielding to the first impulse of self-preservation he knelt and said the Lord's Prayer.

STRINDBERG'S MOTHER
Ulrika Eleonora Norling

STRINDBERG'S FATHER
Oskar Strindberg

UNIV. OF UTAH

A thought came to him. He rose, examined the reading-desk, saw that the damage was not irreparable, took off his boot and mended the desk with a few well-directed blows. He then calmly walked out of the church feeling that the power within himself was, after all, more reliable than the God whose help he had invoked. The mysterious interrelation between whole-hearted prayer and the dormant powers within ourselves is seldom understood. The child's logic humorously reflected the spiritual instability of average humanity.

His self-reliance was, however, fitful. Sometimes he wept bitterly, battling with an uncontrollable duality within his own mind, a divided will which made him unreasonable and capricious. He developed sudden antipathies, endured fits of shyness and self-abasement, during which he had to run away from other children and hide himself. At such times he would deliberately keep away when good things were distributed, and, on being forgotten, revel in his martyrdom.

August's rebellion against learning lessons developed *pari passu* with his powers of independent thought. He did not make progress at Klara school, and his father transferred him to another, where he mixed with

children of people in humble circumstances. Here he felt more at home; no one looked down on him; his boots and his knickerbockers did not give offence. His pity was aroused by the poverty of some of his schoolfellows. They were expected to be clean, attentive and polite, but how could they? They came from homes where no one could afford to be clean, where families were crowded in small rooms which served as workshops as well as nurseries, where the decencies of life were unattainable luxuries. The contrast between the two schools afforded August material for continued meditation on class problems.

Latin and Greek were the principal subjects taught. August wanted to learn in his own way and to translate in his own way. Both in classics and in history he refused to submit to the discipline of the schoolmaster. Having formulated his own method of learning and the proper form of examining pupils he defied the teacher's order. He was dumb when he should speak, and spoke when he should be silent. When the exasperated Latin master declared August to be an idiot, the father unexpectedly took his son's part and moved him to a private school.

This school had introduced rational methods of teaching; flogging was prohibited, the boys were treated as individuals, and August felt that he could expand without fear of immediate repression. During the years that followed, the family attained a position of comparative affluence and comfort. August lost the dread of being trampled upon or suppressed from above, and mixed freely with titled youths who were accorded no privileges by the headmaster who lacked all reverence for the distinction of birth.

August was wont to parade his knowledge before his mother. At first she took great pride in her son's gifts and the time when he should wear the white cap of honour, coveted by every Swedish student, was often spoken of. But the mother's leanings towards a narrow pietism caused her to discern the vanity of learning in her son's mind. She warned him against the wickedness of such pride, and contrasted the humility of Christ and His contempt of worldly wisdom with the self-conceit of mere book-learning. The son listened, and concluded that the mother's resentment of culture was the result of her own ignorance. One evening the sons were called to the mother's death-bed. August was then

thirteen. Overwhelmed with grief and shivering with the horror of Death, he sat hour after hour by the bed crying, and thinking over all the evil he had done.

This was the inevitable end. How could he live without a mother? The future seemed wrapped in impenetrable darkness and misery. Then oh, horror!—a shameful thought crossed his mind. Some time before his mother had shown him a little ring, and said that it would belong to him after her death. And now, at the solemn and awful moment, the promise of the ring rose in his unwilling memory. He saw it on his finger—one bright spot in this sorrowful hour, something to look forward to.

But only for a moment—such low covetousness, such a shameful thought by the side of a dying mother must come straight from the devil. The pangs of remorse and shame were so persistent that the incident fixed itself in his memory, and years afterwards the recollection made him blush.

The allurements of thoughts which we ought not to think, and which range from sudden inconvenient flashes of recognition of the comical in the midst of the serious business of life, to the haunting ideas which

are the débris of mental combustion, could not be understood by the boy. Nor did he know that he was destined to live through the gamut of cerebral phenomena, an exponent of extravagant thought and lawless ideation.

When the stillness of death fell upon the room the unworthy thought was far away and August screamed like a drowning child. The father was softened and spoke kind words to the two boys. Strindberg tells us with his usual candour that his sorrow lasted scarcely three months. "Sorrow," he writes, "has the happy quality of consuming itself. It dies of starvation. As it is essentially an interruption of habits it can be replaced by new ones." After six months his father married the housekeeper.

August was now learning five languages, besides his own. Botany, zoology and the physical sciences aroused his keen interest. He had collections of insects and minerals, and a herbarium to which he devoted much time. He developed an insatiable appetite for knowledge, but he claimed freedom to find his intellectual food without extraneous interference or restrictions. He not only wanted to know everything, but he wanted to be able

to do everything, to be endowed with all human talents.

His brother had been praised for his drawings; August wanted to draw. During the Christmas holidays he copied all his brother's drawings, but on finding that he could do it without difficulty his interest waned and he gave it up. All his brothers and sisters could play some instrument. The house resounded with exercises on the piano, the violin and the 'cello. August wanted to play, but without practising scales. He taught himself to play the piano and learnt to read and copy music. He played badly, but it gave him pleasure. He learnt the names of composers and the number of opus of everything that was played in the house, so that he should have superior knowledge.

He was jealous of the accomplishments of others, but the jealousy was created by unsatisfied ambition, and the consciousness of illimitable capabilities. Every subject interested him, until he had mastered it. When he knew the plants, minerals, insects and birds in his neighbourhood, he turned to other fields of natural science. Physics and chemistry attracted him. He did not want to repeat the classical experiments in the

text-books; he wanted to make new discoveries. The lack of money and apparatus restrained him. Ingenuity was necessary. During the summer holidays he tried to make an electric machine out of an old spinning-wheel and a window pane. An umbrella was broken and made to yield a whalebone, out of which, with the help of a violin string, he made a drill-borer. The square pane had been made circular through patient knocking with a key-bit. This labour had taken days. When the time came for boring a hole in the middle and his piece of quartz made no impression he lost patience, and attempted to force a hole. The pane was smashed and August's enthusiasm converted into hopeless fatigue.

Recovered, he decided to construct a *perpetuum mobile*. His father had told him that a prize was awaiting the inventor of the impossible. After formulating his theory, which included a waterfall driving a pump, he collected his material. A number of useful articles were sacrificed for the purpose: the coffee boiler provided a tube; the soda-water machine, reservoirs; the strong-box, plates; the chest of drawers, wood; the bird-cage, wire, etc. At the crucial moment the ubiquitous

housekeeper interrupted him by asking if he would accompany his brothers and sisters to the mother's grave. Irritation broke the inventive spell, and in the anger of failure he dashed the artful apparatus to pieces on the floor.

Reproaches and ridicule did not deter him. He arranged experimental explosions and manufactured a Leyden jar. For this purpose he flayed a dead black cat which he found in the street. He anticipated "Jönköping's Säkerhetständstickor" by making safety matches which he declares were as good as the later, much-advertised patent.

His wilfulness and lack of mental discipline were necessarily distasteful to his surroundings. When he wanted to unlock a drawer and the key could not be found he seized a poker and broke open the lock with such force that the screws and the plate were torn out.

"Why did you break the lock?" he was asked.

"Because I wanted to get into the chest of drawers," was the laconic reply.

The father not unnaturally decided to do what lay in his power to curb the troublesome spirit of independence in his son. August

disliked his stepmother and resented her usurpation of his mother's place. He was now *gymnasist** and treated with respect in the school. The lessons took the form of lectures, and the teachers showed due regard for individual rights and tastes. At home everything was done to humiliate him. He attributed what he regarded as a systematic persecution to the mean and revengeful spirit of the stepmother. He was made to wear old clothes which did not fit him; his gymnasist-cap, which should have been the pride of his heart, was home-made and an object of ridicule; he was compelled to work in the stable between school hours, and commanded to take the groom's place during the holidays. His weekly allowance for the school lunch was 3½d., a sum which he found sufficient for tobacco but not for sandwiches. He had a healthy appetite and was always hungry. The parsimoniousness of the home régime subjected him to humiliating experiences at school. Once he accidentally broke the eyeglasses of a friend. In vain he exhausted all his inventive resources in attempts to mend them. They had to be mended by an expert at the cost of 7d. On the following Monday

* *Gymnasia* are preparatory schools for Universities.

August brought his friend 3½d., and after another week discharged his debt of honour by shamefacedly paying another 3½d. His miserable poverty could no longer be kept a secret, and he hated the cause of his oppression.

At the age of fifteen he fell in love with a woman of thirty. The love was platonic, an attraction of souls—a contact of minds seeking spiritual enlightenment along the same path. She was a woman of the world, engaged to another who lived abroad, animated by religious emotionalism and half-conscious eroticism. They attended the same circle for French conversation and added the spice of Gallic expression to their correspondence, which treated of Jesus, the struggle against sin, life, death, God in nature, love, friendship and doubt. August became her conscience, and she was his spiritual mother. Strindberg publishes some of his French compositions from this period in his autobiography. All speculations were eventually smashed against the bedrock of Jesus. The parental authorities objected strongly to August's friendship, and especially to the atmosphere of French secrecy in which it was enveloped.

August became absorbed in the struggle

for salvation. A puritanism which despised the cold formalism of the Lutheran State Church and claimed the free companionship of Jesus was fashionable in Sweden at this time. The joyful certainty of being among the sheep infected those susceptible to sudden "revivals" within all classes of society. What could be of greater importance than being amongst the elected of God, comforted by the knowledge of righteousness, borne aloft by complete detachment from the world, the flesh and the devil? August laid passionate siege to Heaven and clamoured for immediate inclusion among the children of God.

His motives were complicated. One was fright and a desire to be on the safe side. For he had read books which predicted a terrible fate in store for youthful sinners upon attaining the age of twenty-five. He knew he was a sinner, and, if his body were condemned to painful afflictions and death, his soul would, at least, be saved. Another was spiritual jealousy. His stepmother professed great religious devotion. She and his eldest brother seemed to outshine him in religious fervour. That could not be tolerated. August imposed severe restrictions upon himself. All worldly

pleasures were to be shunned. One Saturday evening the family planned an excursion for the following Sunday. August asked his father's permission to stay at home for conscientious reasons. He spent Sunday morning in one of the "free" churches, where the elect gloried in their exclusive and dearly bought salvation. In the afternoon he studied Thomas à Kempis and Krummacher. The stepmother had broken the Sabbath. She was inconsistent and a prey to the temptations of the devil; she could no longer compete with him in religious virtue. That was balm to the soul, but the peace of Jesus, which he had been told would descend like a clap of thunder and be followed by absolute certainty, would not come. He walked alone to Haga Park, praying all the time that Jesus would seek him out. In the park he saw happy families absorbed in picnics and carriages filled with gay men and women. All these were destined to eternal damnation. His reason protested, but his faith assented. He returned home unharmonious and unsatisfied. When late in the evening his brothers and sisters related the incidents of their happy day, his envy was mixed with pangs of remorse.

The puritanical phase culminated during the confirmation, which had been postponed by the father, who, knowing the waywardness of the child, feared the unrestraint of the youth. A number of circumstances contributed to the reaction which followed upon his first Holy Communion. He had whipped his reason into submission to an elated sentiment which in due course exhausted itself. The Sacramental bread was robbed of its mystery by the fatal familiarity with which he had treated it in the sexton's kitchen.

But the disintegration of the puritan was accomplished through the influence of new friends. One of these decided to cure the hungry dreamer in Strindberg by a good meal. One day on the way to the Greek lesson, Fritz, " the friend with the eye-glasses," suggested that they should play truant and lunch at a restaurant. Scruples overcome, August enjoyed his first meal in a restaurant and his first glass of brandy. The luxuries of beefsteak and beer in quantitative perfection, and the audacity with which his friend treated the waiter, made a profound impression on him. The friend paid for the feast, and August came out a changed man.

" This was not an empty pleasure, as the

pale man had asserted," he writes. "No, it was a solid pleasure to feel red blood run through half-empty arteries which were to nourish the nerves for the struggle of life. It was a pleasure to feel spent strength return and the lax sinews of a half-crushed will stretched again. Hope was awakened, the mist became a rosy cloud, and the friend let him see glimpses of the future as it was formed by friendship and youth."

The friend advised him to earn money by giving private lessons. This would secure freedom from parental tyranny. He encouraged independence and self-confidence in August, who, acting upon his advice, obtained a post as private tutor. By exercising economy in the expenditure of brains at the gymnasium and limiting his studies to those absolutely necessary for the final examen, he succeeded in his dual work of learner and teacher. The sense of sin departed; he was able to take part in the festivities of his school-fellows. The platonic friendship with the woman of thirty evaporated with the advent of a less ethereal admiration for the beauty of waitresses *et hoc genus omne*. He went to dances and sought jollity in the "punsch-evenings" of the students. A craving for alcohol had

been aroused ; under its influence the demons of gloom and insoluble problems departed.

The change in his attitude to life was hastened by an influence which now made itself felt for the first time. Literature as a great tradition and interpretation of human problems became known to him. The belletristic and the puritanical conceptions of life presented themselves in their profoundest antithesis. Natural selection did the rest. His range of reading was wide and varied, as were the demands of his many-sided self. He devoured Shakespeare, admired Dickens, found Walter Scott tedious, Alexandre Dumas puerile, and Eugène Sue's *Le Juif Errant* grandiose. He detested poetry ; it was affected and untrue. People did not talk in that manner and seldom thought of such beautiful things. The realisation of God in Nature replaced the desire to seek God in the churches, and August gradually discovered that he was a freethinker. The alarm and public prayers of the elect, which he had deserted, did not alter his course.

During the summer holidays he acted as tutor to an aristocratic family in the country. Fritz had warned him against saying everything he thought and doing everything he

wanted, or disputing vehemently with his superiors. But the difficulty of submitting to the conventions of the social order could not be overcome.

August's plans for the future were vacillating and embarrassing to the father. For a short time he cherished the idea of becoming a non-commissioned officer in a cavalry regiment, at another time the plan of spending his days as a country curate, joined in happy wedlock to a pretty waitress (a brand snatched from the fire), had captivated him. But the University conquered. At the University a man could be poor and badly dressed and yet be counted a gentleman; it was the only place where one could sing, get drunk and have fights with the police without losing social standing. There was a secret satisfaction in the thought.

One day during the tutorage in the country the vicar, who was overworked, invited August to preach a "proof-sermon." The practice of permitting serious-minded students and undergraduates to try their priestly powers was not uncommon. The idea was glorious and irresistible. The baron, the baroness, the squires and the ladies would all have to listen reverently to August as the

1870 AUGUST STRINDBERG 1862

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UNIV. OF MICH.

mouthpiece of the Lord. But he remembered that he was a freethinker. The orthodox conception of Jesus was no longer his. It was hypocrisy to accept the offer. And yet, he believed in God, he had thoughts to give, opinions he wanted to voice. He confessed to the vicar, who reassured him. If he believed in God, there was no real difficulty—the good Bishop Wallin had never mentioned Jesus in his sermons. August should only not talk too much about his aberrations.

The week during which the sermon was prepared, was rich in compensation for years of ignominy. Something within him responded with avidity to the call of the messenger, the prophet.

The church was filled with people when August mounted the pulpit in clerical garb and with a beating heart. He prayed to the only true God to help him when now he wanted to strike a blow for truth. He spoke of conversion through free will and opened the gates of heaven to all—publicans and sinners, rulers and harlots—and denounced his old friends who were sunk in cruel and hypocritical self-conceit. He was deeply moved by his own eloquence. The vicar and the congregation forgave the irregu-

larities, and the day ended in mutual satisfaction.

The experience confirmed August's contempt of orthodox religion. He became the ringleader of a section in the highest class in the *Gymnasium* which, in spite of threats and reprimands, refused to attend morning prayers. Once when the father begged him to go to church he replied :

" Preach—I can do that myself."

In May, 1867, August passed his *student-examen*. The white cap was on his head, and the gates of the University were open to him.

CHAPTER II

THE STRUGGLE FOR SELF-EXPRESSION

A UNIVERSITY, said Newman, is a place where "mind comes first and is the foundation of the academical polity." Strindberg's contact with the University of Upsala brought his own creative mind into constant conflict with the custodians of regulations which govern the traditional pursuit of knowledge. Between 1867 and 1872 he spent periods at Upsala, during which he made vain attempts to achieve success as a dutiful learner, submissive to the discipline of professorial authority. The difficulty was not that he would not or could not study. He studied too much; his mind absorbed with intuitive and lightning quickness knowledge from men and books. But he refused to take opinions on trust; he individualised everything that was assimilated by his receptive and turbulent mind, and scorned academical routine.

In the autumn of 1867 August Strindberg went to Upsala to equip himself with the powers and graces which accompany a "university education." He possessed the sum of 80 kronor (1 krona = 1s. 2d.), laboriously earned by private lessons; his father had contributed a few cigars to his son's outfit and advised him to shift for himself. Margaret, the old kind-hearted servant, had forced a loan of 15 kronor upon him. Thus he was again victimised by a woman's heart.

The room which he shared with a friend, was rented for 30 kronor for the whole term. It contained two beds, two tables, two chairs, and a cupboard. His dinner was brought by the charwoman for 1 kr. 50 öre per week. Breakfast and supper consisted of a glass of milk and a bun. By practising the strictest economy he managed to live, but he soon discovered that he could not afford to buy the necessary books, nor the regulation dress-coat, without which no Swedish undergraduate could solicit the kind attention of the professors. He did not attract attention as a promising student. His attendance at lectures served chiefly as a stimulus to his critical faculties. He found the methods of teaching literature and philosophy tedious

and ineffective, the professors ignorant and plebeian. He borrowed books and selected his own reading. He taught himself to play the cornet in one of the University orchestras, thus attempting to soothe the discord of his soul.

He grew tired of his friend Fritz. "They had worn out their friendship by living together," he writes in *Fermentation Time*. "They knew each other by heart, knew each other's secrets and weaknesses, knew what answer the other would give in argument." He accepted the end of their friendship as the inevitable result of the exploitation of personality which he resented in friendship and in love. Personal attractions and ties were masked warfare in Strindberg's life; he gave and he took, and generally ended by despising. Throughout life his caustic efforts to reach the centre of things did not tend to strengthen bonds which depend on a certain amount of pleasant illusion and benign deception.

His love of nature brought no disillusionment. "It was his dream to live in the country," he writes of his Upsala time. "He had an inborn dislike of town, though born in a capital. He had culture-hostility in the blood, could never get rid of the sense

of being a product of Nature which did not want to be torn from the organic union with earth. He was a wild plant, the roots of which in vain sought a little soil between the stones of the pavement; he was an animal longing for the forest."

The delight in the beauty and fragrance of flowers, the preference for the simplicity of rural life which he so often expressed show a mood unaffected by discontent and pessimism. Some sprite of nature-joy dwelt within him and remained happy in spite of unhappiness. After uttering curses on the sins of humanity he would be found singing pæans to the harmony of the plant-world.

At the end of the first term he had spent his eighty kronor and returned to Stockholm in search of remunerative work. After several unsuccessful attempts to obtain a post in the country, he found a situation as teacher at the Stockholm Board-School at a yearly salary of £50, which to him seemed opulence. He now lived at home, and contributed to the household expenses.

The schoolmaster of eighteen was again brought face to face with the problems of poverty. The injustice, under which he had

smarted as a child, was still alive. He was now in the detestable position of the pedagogical tyrant, but his pity had not diminished. He was expected to chastise the lazy children, but his heart refused to accept the prevalent faith in flogging. The children—ugly, stunted, pale, starved, sickly—appealed to his pity.

"Suffering," he writes, "has stamped on the faces of the lower classes that expression of hopelessness and torment which neither religious resignation nor the hope of heaven can obliterate, and from which the upper classes flee as from an evil conscience."

He studied the penalty of industrialism, and observed that the children of the manual labourer looked more sickly and less intelligent than those of the upper class:

"The trade-diseases of the urban workingman seemed to be transmitted; here one saw in miniature the lungs and the blood of the gas-worker, ruined through sulphurous fumes; the shoulders and flattened feet of the smith; the brain of the painter, atrophied through the fumes of varnish and poisonous paints; the scrofulous eruption of the sweep; the contracted chest of the bookbinder; here one heard the echo of the cough of the metal-worker and the asphalt manufacturer,

smelt the poisons of the wall-paper maker; noticed the watchmaker's myopia in new editions. In truth, this was not a race which possessed the future, or upon which the future could reckon, and it cannot reproduce itself for any length of time, for the ranks of the artisans are constantly recruited from the country."

His sympathy with the working classes was no passing sentiment; it was the lasting keynote of his plea for social justice which is clearly heard through the cacophony of some of his later outbursts against the social order.

Rebellious contempt of current morals and respectability rose as a mighty force in the mind of this extraordinary schoolmaster. His morning duties at the board-school and his afternoon work as private tutor to the daughters of a well-to-do and refined family compelled him to outward decorum. But he did not live virtuously. His sense-life was awake, and he recognised no necessity for restraint. The strivings after ascetic peace which filled his adolescence had been laid aside; with the breaking of his faith in the watchful solicitude of Jesus, natural impulses had been set free. His autobiography records his early struggles, and his later "fall" with the same

detached imperturbability. He lacks the sense of shame which avoids certain topics. He observes no reticences. The pages in many of his books are studded with coarse language and unsavoury references to physical life. The sexual cynicism which pervades the story of his life is only relieved by his perfect sincerity.

He describes the pleasures of inebriation with similar frankness. At the age of nineteen he was already familiar with Bacchic revels. His brain was inflamed with ideas, congested with unformulated thought. The narcosis of alcohol attracted him.

"Sometimes melancholy, at other times gay," he writes, "he sometimes felt an irresistible craving to extinguish the burning fire of thought and to stop the turmoil of the brain. Shy, he sometimes felt impelled to come forward, to make an impression, to find an audience, to appear in public. When he had drunk a great deal, he wished to recite great and solemn things, but in the middle of the piece, when ecstasy was at its height, he heard his own voice, became shy, frightened, thought himself ridiculous, stopped suddenly, changed his tone, took up the comical, and finished with a grimace. He had pathos, but

only for a while; then self-criticism came, and he laughed at his forced emotions."

Strindberg finds another explanation of his craving for alcohol in the lack of nourishing diet at Upsala and the dulness of his home in Stockholm. "Strong liquors gave him strength," he says, "and he slept well after them." He adds: "Like the rest of the race, he was born of drunkards, generation after generation from pagan times immemorial, when ale and mead were used, and the desire had inevitably become a necessity."

He was not a success as a board-school teacher. There were bargains with his conscience during scripture lessons, and the prevailing system of teaching seemed a cruel parody. He shrank from the sights and sounds and smells of the herd of poor children. Ambition and intellectual hunger called him to seek experience elsewhere.

His restlessness was increased through reading Byron's *Manfred* and Schiller's *Die Räuber*. He tried to translate the former into Swedish, but discovered to his chagrin that he could not write blank verse. Karl Moor in *Die Räuber* laid hold of his imagination with the claims of a kindred spirit. Here was his own heterodoxy and revolt against laws,

society, customs, religion made manifest in a living, literary figure by a great writer. Schiller's maturer repudiation of his fierce bandit did not trouble him. Manfred fleeing from himself to the Alps appealed to him as a feat of rebellion complementary to Karl Moor's adventures.

At the age of nineteen the rôle of the schoolmaster was exchanged for that of the student of medicine. His duties at the board-school had become intolerable, when, one evening, a friend, an old doctor, knocked at his door and suggested that he should desert the school and enlist in the service of Aesculapius. His fatherly friend brushed aside objections on the ground of poverty by suggesting that Strindberg should live in his house and, in return, act as tutor to his boys. In spite of the dreary prospect of eight years of medical studies the kindly offer was accepted; for the profession of medicine seemed the portal to enviable knowledge. Not the dry, stereotyped dogmas of the Church and the University curriculum, but real wisdom penetrating life's mysteries. "To become a sage who understood life's riddles—that was his dream for the moment." He disliked the idea of a career in the service of the State or of being

a mere figure, a wheel or a screw, in the social machinery. The physician seemed to him to be free.

His preparatory studies were carried out at the Technological Institute. Here the vigorous fantasy of the future alchemist received the first stimulus through chemical experiments which fascinated him by revealing the secrets of matter. Here he also studied zoology, anatomy, botany and physics.

But other powers were at work undermining the solidifying influence of application to science. In the doctor's house he met writers and artists. Conversation generally turned on plays, pictures, books, authors and actors. There was a fine library, offering the world's literary treasures. There was a collection of pictures and there were valuable engravings. The intellectual atmosphere was international, and afforded a pleasant change from the vulgar patriotism which had been sacred to the pedagogues of the board-school.

The Dramatic Theatre was near at hand. Here a new and gaily attractive world was opened to him. Standing in the gallery he listened to the badinage of French comedy and saw the types of the Second Empire in

aristocratic setting. Thus he spent several evenings every week. The life of the actor seemed strangely interesting, for he was allowed to express himself, to speak unwelcome truths without losing popularity. The theatrical profession seemed outside and above the petty rules of society—a privileged class. It offered special and glorious opportunities for artistic self-expression.

Meanwhile the experiences of his medical education had become distasteful. The old physician brought his pupil to see patients, rich and poor, providing him with diverse "clinical material." He was asked to assist at early morning operations and to hold the patients. Whilst Strindberg held the patient's head, the doctor "removed glands with a fork." The assistant's thoughts were soaring high above the surgery, in the regions of Goethe's *Faust* and Wieland's novels; they were with George Sand, Chateaubriand and Lessing. During cauterisation the smell of human flesh rose in his nostrils and spoilt his appetite for breakfast. He describes his state of mind in the following words: "Imagination had been set in motion and memory would not work; reality with its burns and blood clots was ugly; aestheticism had seized

the youth, and life seemed dull and repulsive."

A futile attempt to pass a preliminary medical examination at Upsala precipitated his decision not to enter a profession which was exclusively occupied with the aches of the body. In spite of the disappointment of his medical benefactor, he announced his intention of becoming an actor.

He now lived for some months in an ideal stage-world. After making arrangements for obtaining practical instruction in the autumn, he devoted the summer to private studies of the art which appeared to be his true and only vocation in life. Schiller's lecture, "On the Theatre as an Institution for Moral Education," saturated his mind with a lofty and idealistic conception of the ethical and aesthetic mission of the stage. Was not this the greatest of all human arts? Was it not a calling worthy of the finest talent and the most devoted labour? He buried his past restlessness in faithful search for knowledge of the actor's gifts and graces. Goethe taught him how to stand, sit down, carry himself, how to enter and leave a room gracefully. He studied the pose of antique sculpture and practised to walk with uplifted head

and expanded chest, whilst the arms were trained to swing easily and the hand to be lightly closed with the fingers forming a beautifully shaped curve. He tried to conquer his shyness and his fear of crossing open places, and paraded his new artful self in the most frequented *promenade* in Stockholm.

The doctor's house was made the scene of his dramatic exercises. Here he prepared the performance of *Die Räuber* and appeared himself as Karl Moor. When his vocal practices disturbed the peace of the house, he repaired to Ladugårdsgärdet, the vast fields and hills, on the east side of Stockholm, which for many years past have been used for military manœuvres. They now also serve as a starting-point for aerial flights. But no mechanical wings of flight could equal those, on which Strindberg's imagination soared towards the realisation of his mission as an artist and a social reformer.

Here, he tells us, he stormed against heaven and earth. The city, the church spires of which were visible, represented Society, whilst he belonged to Nature. "He shook his fist at the palace, the churches, the barracks, and snarled at the troops which during the manœuvres sometimes came too near him. There

was something fanatical in his work, and he spared no pains to make his reluctant muscles obedient."

The keen resentment of injustice and the irrepressible sympathy with the poor and the down-trodden, which the later misanthropy of the man could never quell, showed forth in an episode of this time, connected with the unveiling of a statue of Charles XII. Though the statue had been erected through public donations, the arrangements for the unveiling were such as to exclude the people from a view of the proceedings. The people threatened to pull down the stands for paying spectators which obscured the view, and the troops were called out to restore order. August was seated at a gay dinner-party at the doctor's house in honour of some Italian operatic stars, when the sounds of the battle reached the ears of the company.

"What is that?" asked the prima donna.

"It is the noise of the mob," said a professor.

August could not sit still. The clinking of glasses, the light dinner-talk, the jests and laughter jarred on him. Who were these who spoke of the people as "mob"? Something stirred within his breast with the call

of blood and the passion of identical feeling. He left the table and went out into the streets.

"'The mob'!" he writes, "the word rang in his ears, whilst he walked down the street. The mob! they were his mother's former school-fellows, they were his school-fellows and later his pupils, they were the dark background which made the light pictures effective in the place he had just left. He felt like a deserter, as if he had done wrong in working his way up."

He reached the place where the statue had been raised, and mixed with the excited crowds. The clatter of hoofs and the sight of the approaching Life Guards filled him with a mad desire to resist all this mass of men, horses and sabres. Together they were oppression incarnate.

August placed himself in the middle of the street, right in front of the approaching cavalry. Through his mind flashed the call to revolt, the born rebel's impulsive desire for self-immolation.

A hand seized him and pulled him out of danger. He was led home, and after promising not to return to the scene of struggle the inevitable reaction set in with exhaustion and high temperature in the evening.

On the day of the unveiling he was present among the undergraduates. At the end of the ceremony there was a skirmish between the police and the people. Stones were thrown and order was restored by means of sabre-cuts. A man standing near Strindberg was attacked by a police inspector. August rushed at the inspector, seized him by the collar and shook him.

"Let the man go!" he cried.

"Who are you?" asked the astounded inspector.

"I am Satan," answered the demoniacal liberator, "and I shall take you, if you don't let the fellow go."

In trying to seize August the inspector released his hold of the man. At the same moment a stone knocked off the three-cornered hat of authority from the inspector's head, and August wrenched himself free. The police drove the crowd before them at the point of the bayonet. August followed with other enthusiasts, determined to release the prisoners. The attempt was, of course, futile; the bayonets were the strongest.

Strindberg describes how two gentlemen, one middle-aged, the other young, both highly respectable, with conservative views, were

seized with his own passionate longing to defend the people against the police. Speechless, they instinctively grasped each other's hands, and with white, set faces ran to the rescue. When the excitement was over, and the wave of sympathy had spent itself, they awoke in their normal selves and were shocked at their own conduct. August himself could jest over his wild outburst, when half an hour later he was seated in a restaurant with a chop in front of him and friends around to listen to an objective account of the whole incident. The middle-aged merchant of impeccable propriety failed to recognise August, when, by chance, they met again. The composite consciousness created by the contagion of strong emotion had ceased to exist.

When his dramatic recitals to the winds which sweep over Ladugårdsgärdet had been followed by the prosaic training at the school of the Dramatic Theatre, the conflict between dream and reality was followed by the usual tragic results. His wish to make his début in an important part was rudely brushed aside. After some humiliating experiences, he was given a small part in Björnson's *Mary Stuart*. He appeared as a "nobleman," and all his dramatic energy was, perforce, encompassed

in the following sentence: "The Peers have sent an emissary with a challenge to the Earl of Bothwell."

It was bitterly insignificant, but it was the portal to greater achievement.

The disillusionment of his first glimpse behind the scenes was manfully rebutted. The boards and the paint which, when seen from the gallery, had held so much charm, were now, when scrutinised from the other side, dusty and ugly. The actors who were permitted to play great parts were, after all, just like ordinary mortals. They yawned loudly between their turns, and gave expression to commonplace sentiments as a relief from the sublimities uttered on the stage.

After some months, during which Strindberg was only a super, he was heartily tired of the whole thing. The mechanism, living and dead, of dramatic production disgusted him. He felt repressed and misjudged. But at the same time he was ashamed of quitting the profession which he had chosen with such high expectations. He demanded his right to be tried and judged. He was given an important part and a special rehearsal, at which he appeared without stage costume and without the requisite enthusiasm. The elder

actors resented the arrangement, and Strindberg shouted his sentences in a manner which made it clear that he was in need of further instruction. He was advised to resume his pupilage. But this he would not do. The humiliation was unbearable. He cried with rage and decided to commit suicide. An opium pill which he had treasured with a view to the possibility of having to summon a catastrophic end to life's difficulties was utilised for the purpose, but failed altogether of a calamitous effect. A friend, who knew the better way, re-awakened Strindberg's interest in earthly existence through a merry drinking bout.

On the following day, he tells us, he felt bruised, wounded, torn, with quivering nerves and with the fever of shame and drunkenness in his veins. He lay on his sofa reading Topelius' *Tales of a Surgeon* and musing over his own troubles. His brain worked at high pressure, sorting memories, adding and eliminating, calling out personalities. He heard his characters speak. It was as if he saw them on a stage. After a few hours he had visualised a comedy in two acts, and in four days the play was written.

" It was a work," he writes in *Fermentation*

Time, "at once painful and pleasurable, if it even could be called work, for it came of itself, without his will or effort."

"And when the piece was ready," he tells us, "he drew a deep sigh, as if years of pain were over, as if an abscess had been lanced. He was so happy that something sang within him, and he decided to send his piece to the theatre. This was the salvation."

Macaulay thought that books are written either to relieve the fulness of the mind or the emptiness of the pocket. He ignored the intimate correlation between the two motives. The full mind is only too often made inarticulate by the empty pocket, whilst, on the other hand, the empty pocket sometimes accelerates processes of the mind which, but for that stimulus, would never reach fulness. Strindberg was throughout life the slave of a full mind and an empty pocket.

His first effort in drama had now to be submitted to competent criticism. He prepared the garret which he rented from the doctor for the festive reception of two wise friends. A clean napkin on the table, two candles and a bottle of "punsch" were the outer signs of the solemnity with which he welcomed his critics. The play was read to the

end in sympathetic silence. The friends then saluted August as an author.

When alone he fell on his knees and thanked God who had delivered him out of his difficulties and who had given him the gift of literary expression. Perhaps no subsequent literary crises of gestation ever equalled the first in intensity of expectation; he felt that he had at last found his vocation, the part he was called upon to play in life.

The material for his first play had been his own family troubles; his religious doubts now found expression in a play in three acts. He had also discovered that he could write rhymed verse, presumably as the result of a visitation of the Holy Ghost. A feverish power of production followed: in two months he wrote two comedies, a tragic verse drama and some poems.

The first comedy had been submitted to the manager of the Royal Theatre. Meanwhile the anonymous author continued to walk the boards, now buoyed by a secret joy. His turn would come; the thought of the day when he would be recognised made him bold. In his peasant costume he felt a prince in disguise.

But the comedy was not accepted. The

tragedy which he also sent in met with the same fate, though he received a kindly hint that it would be worth his while to perfect himself in the art of dramatic construction, and that time and experience would be more profitably expended on a literary career than on further attempts to succeed as an actor. He was advised to return to Upsala. A tragedy with the title *Jesus of Nazareth* was sketched out. It was intended to crush Christianity completely and for all time. It was only partly written, when, happily, it was abandoned, the youthful author having succumbed to the magnitude of his subject.

His last appearance on the stage was ignominious, yet symbolic of his future as a writer of drama. No part whatever had been found for him. He offered to act as prompter and was accepted. Thus ended the career upon which he had entered with such glorious zest.

CHAPTER III

"FERMENTATION TIME"

GOADED by misfortune, the recalcitrant scholar returned to Upsala determined to distinguish himself by obtaining his degree or by writing a successful play which would compensate for past failures. His return was made possible by the possession of a few hundred kronor, left to him under his mother's will.

With five kindred souls he founded a poetical guild to which the name *Rune*—"Song"—was given. The meetings of the brethren were occasions for improvisation and tippling, for hair-splitting arguments and epicurean excesses. They philosophised over life and literature, expressed the joy of existence in music, and alcoholic melancholy in sad tales of suffering.

August wrote and read poetry which breathed idealism, nature-worship and patriotism. He sang to the guitar, sometimes sentimental folk-songs, sometimes compositions of a less worthy kind.

The dialectics of the company stimulated August's powers of expression, though they interfered with his studies.

A friend advised him to write a one-act play in verse. This, he said, would have a greater chance of being acted than a tragedy in five acts, which August thought more fitting. The one-act play was written in a fortnight. It was called *In Rome* and dealt with Thorvaldsen's first stay in that city. The idea had long been present in his mind. It burst into dramatic shape with unmistakable force, and the friends, recognising that it had a living spirit, prophesied that it would be accepted. The birth of the play was duly celebrated with carousals, in which the author was acclaimed with generous admiration.

The psychology of drunkenness was one of the subjects for incisive discussion and historical analysis at the meetings of the *Rune*. The members certainly did not lack practical experience of its mental perplexities, but, however vinous their youthful judgment of the problems of life generally, they appraised the possibilities of August Strindberg's art with singular accuracy.

Strindberg's slender resources did not save

him from the pinch of poverty. He had tasted luxury in the doctor's house. His room in Upsala was squalid; the rain came through the ceiling, fire-wood was scarce, and occasional frugal suppers of bread and water were forcible reminders of life's realities. He managed, nevertheless, to study aesthetics and living languages with a new ardour. His range of reading was widened, and his critical faculties were in a continuous process of development.

Ibsen and Björnson dominated the intellectual horizon. August had been deeply stirred by *Brand*, when reading it a year earlier, and had felt the soul-struggles of Ibsen's deliverer to be identical with his own, but he now reacted against the Norwegian invasion of the Swedish mind. The gloom of the mountains and fjords of Norway, the poverty and enforced abstinences of its people were reflected in the minds of its writers, and had no rightful place amongst the smiling lakes and flower-strewn sward of Sweden. Ibsen's women now roused the instinctive sex-antagonism in Strindberg; he hated Nora, and the whole brood of matriarchal ideas, of which he thought Ibsen a dangerous modern exponent. Strindberg's later writings against

women are indirect replies to Ibsen ; and his objections to woman's struggle for emancipation were expressed with a controversial vehemence which robbed them of literary effect.

In the autumn of 1870 *In Rome* was performed at the Royal Theatre at Stockholm. The author was twenty-one years old. He watched the play, standing in his old place in the gallery. The inebriation of success was now followed by acute pangs of self-criticism. He felt as if he had been under an electric battery, his legs trembled, and he wept with nervousness. A friend seized his hand to calm him.

" Every stupidity," he writes, " which had slipped into the verse shook him and jarred upon his ears. He saw nothing but imperfections in his work. His ears burnt with shame, and he ran out before the curtain fell."

The attacks upon the clergy now seemed stupid and unjust, the glorification of poverty and pride, mistaken ; the description of his relationship to his father, cynical.

He had found his own play stupid ; he was overcome with shame, and death by drowning in the rapid waters of Norrström seemed the only atonement.

The incident is characteristic of the man.

The thoughts which a few months before had been conjured up by the imaginative contemplation of Thorvaldsen before the statue of Jason, of the struggle between filial duty and artistic consciousness, were now outside their author, dismissed, objects of pity. He had grown, whilst the imperfect words lay dead on the paper.

The evening ended in the company of friends. His searchings after perfection and his intellectual remorse were assuaged by food and drink and by the gratification of the lower impulses, to which he yielded without the sense of shame or sin.

On the following day he read a favourable notice of the play, in which the language was described as beautiful, and the anonymous author was said to be a well-known critic who was familiar with the artistic world in Rome.

Thus he made his first acquaintance with the sweets of dramatic criticism. *In Rome* has nothing of the fierce personality which, in his later plays, outraged the critics of Sweden. There are strokes of fine picturing, and there is charm of phrase, but the piece is meagre in conception and puerile in expression.

He returned to Upsala and was now, by his father's intervention, lodged in the house of the widow of a clergyman. It was hoped that a well-regulated home-life, with sufficiency of food and a minimum of comfort, would provide his spirits with wholesome restraint. But the reverse happened. There were a number of undergraduates staying in the house; the table was laden with good things; card-playing and heavy drinking occupied the evenings. August was frequently drunk, his brain was saturated with the clashing opinions of the young men, who loudly wooed their *Weltanschauung;* he was dissatisfied, persecuted by doubts and unreasonable remorse. He was in love—for the eighth time—and the object of his love was, as usual, unattainable.

In Rome had met with severe, though not altogether unjust criticism in another paper. His earlier play, *The Freethinker*, had been printed and published anonymously through the kind offices of a friend. It fell into the hands of a hostile journalist who ridiculed it. Strindberg now underwent the painful experience of mental dissection at the hands of a ruthless critic. However willingly we may condemn ourselves and indulge in the

bitter-sweet contemplation of the follies of yesterday's ego, the rude touch of another's flail arouses every fibre of self-defence.

Though he had promised his father to turn his face against the temptations of authorship and to give single-minded attention to studies, the creative impulse could not be quelled. He wrote *Blotsven*, a tragedy in five acts, which reiterated the religious rebellion of *The Freethinker*, depicting the struggle between the spirit of the Viking and proselytising Christianity. The old Icelandish tales which he now read in the original, and the influence of Oehlenschläger, had helped to mould the form.

At this time he became absorbed in the mentality of the Danish writer Sören Kierkegaard. His book *Enten-Eller*—Either Or—which treats of the struggle between the flesh and the spirit, and which preaches the life-fearing asceticism of the helpless sensualist, stirred Strindberg's doubts and self-reproaches. An elder friend by the runic name of "Is," whose real name was Josef Linck, managed, by the simulation of much learning, culminating in intellectual nihilism, to persuade August that his stand-point was untenable. The friend talked philosophy, aesthetics, world-

history, dished up Kant, Schopenhauer, Thackeray and George Sand, and dyed August's soul with impotent scepticism.

The result was that Strindberg burnt the MSS. of his *Blotsven*. The friend had shown that he was not a poet, and the tears which he shed over the ashes were embittered by the knowledge that he had deceived his father.

He hurriedly decided to pass his examination in Latin compositions. He had not made the requisite preparation, called on the Professor in a state of after-dinner exaltation, demonstrated his independence of spirit, and was promptly turned out.

The suicide of a student brought the supernatural to the door of the already overvisited mind. Strindberg had met the unhappy man some days before and avoided his company. On visiting the place of the tragedy, he was completely unnerved by the sight of blood and the gruesome associations. He felt half guilty of murder, could not sleep and was haunted by the dead man. The Runic brethren watched over him, but his friend "Rejd" nevertheless found him with a bottle of prussic acid and sinister intentions. The friend shrewdly suggested a preparatory sacrificial rite of four "toddies" before the

fatal poison was drained. The desired effect was soon apparent. August had to be carried home, but as the gate of the house was closed his friends threw him over the fence. He remained in a snow-drift until he had recovered sufficiently to find his room. But his ghost-ridden soul did not find peace until he quitted Upsala a few days later.

He confessed his sins to his father and obtained permission to remain at home, and to prepare for his degree in a less disturbing atmosphere. He now "felt protected as if he had landed after a night's stormy voyage," and slept calmly in his old truckle-bed. *Blotsven* rose from the ashes. He re-wrote it in a fortnight. It was now condensed into one act under the title *The Outlaw*, and was sent to the theatre.

Being thus relieved of the supreme duties to his dramatic *daimon*, he again descended to Latin compositions and passed his examen in spite of continued defiance of the Professor's rules of procedure. The aesthetic thesis, which he submitted shortly afterwards, was promptly returned to him by the Professor, with the remark that its contents were more suitable for the fair readers of an illustrated weekly than for an academical

discourse. This was indeed injustice. August had poured out his most mature views on realism *versus* idealism, utilising the Danish dramatist Oehlenschläger as a buffer between his new and his old self. The essay is re-printed in full in the autobiography, and is well worth reading. The style is rich in imagery and analogy, the conclusions audacious, though a gentle world-weariness pervades every argument. Strindberg's later style as an incisive essayist is discernible in spite of the periphrastic treatment of dramatic problems from Sophocles to Shakespeare. The desire to show erudition is apparent on every page, and the author confesses that the wish to show the Professor his profound knowledge of Danish literature was one of his motives in choosing the subject. The Professor's unsympathetic attitude towards his review of Danish literature was, therefore, mortifying.

His quiet life at home had begun well. The earlier struggle against poverty had been superseded by well-ordered home-life. August's sisters were now grown up; he was impressed and felt sanctified by their unostentatious discharge of daily duties which contrasted so sharply with his own wild and worthless past. The stern father had been

mellowed by time, and August spent many evenings with him in friendly talk on great subjects.

But rebellion soon drove the son away. August resented some trifling interference with his liberty, borrowed a few hundred kronor, and settled for the summer in a fisherman's cottage on one of the Baltic islands outside Stockholm. With three of the Runic brethren he now threw himself into a healthy outdoor life, bathing, sailing, fencing. The body was to be taught natural goodness, and the counsels of Satan were to be unheeded. He studied philology, avoided alcohol, and dwelt with Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe. Natural asceticism and the mental discipline of classifying root-words would curb his vigorous fantasy and help him to acquit himself with honour at Upsala. He could expect no further help from the father.

At the beginning of the autumn term he arrived in Upsala hungry and with one krona in his pocket. He felt justified in borrowing from friends, for he was confident of the future. With the small sums which he succeeded in drawing on the bank of friendship he rented a miserable room, which contained little but a bed without sheets or pillowcases.

He lay on it in his underclothing, reading by the light of a candle stuck in a bottle. Kind friends were responsible for an irregular supply of food, but no spartan resolutions could temper the cold weather. He succeeded in borrowing a little wood and carried it home under cover of darkness. A physicist taught him to extract the full calorific value from the charcoal. There was a stovepipe in the room which was hot every Thursday when the landlady did her washing. Then he stood reading with his hands on his back, leaning against the pipe, with the chest of drawers doing service as a reading-desk.

His Viking play had meanwhile been accepted. The first performance was received coldly. The critics were ungracious; he was accused of having borrowed the form from Ibsen, though the cold restraint and rugged simplicity of the language were directly inspired by the Icelandish Sagas.

Sick at heart, Strindberg resumed his battle with poverty and dejection. The darkness of uncertainty was again upon him, when, with the suddenness which is usually reserved for good boys in fairy tales, Fortuna held out her hand. He received a letter announcing that the King was interested in his play and

wished to see him. He could not believe his eyes, and suspected that the letter was a joke. On being re-assured of the genuineness of the message, he went to Stockholm and was received by Charles XV. The King smiled as the young author made his stumbling way to the royal presence through the lines of courtiers, and greeted him with geniality. Charles XV, himself a poet, expressed the pleasure which he had derived from the Viking play, and his personal interest in the revival of the old northern tales. After inquiries regarding Strindberg's financial prospects, the King ordered a yearly stipend of eight hundred kronor to be paid to him from the privy purse.

August left the palace, moved and grateful, with the first quarterly instalment of the monarch's bounty in his pocket.

The short play which had won royal favour is the first work in which Strindberg's mastery over his dramatic art was foreshadowed. The terse phrasing fitly embodies the spirit of Norseman valour. It grips the reader with the force of a *drapa*, sung in faithful celebration of life's attempts and hard-won victories. Gunlöd, the daughter of Thorfinn, the old heathen Viking, has been secretly

baptised and loves the Christian Viking, Gunnar. The human conflict between sorrow and resignation, faith and doubt, is drawn with a passionate wish to do justice to everyone. Strindberg possessed that power of visualising and speaking through the characters of a play with equally apportioned interest, which is essential to the true dramatist. His own words on his relationship to the Viking play, show that he was fully aware of this faculty of artistic self-multiplication and of its penalties :

" Johan* had incarnated himself in five persons in the play. In the earl, who fights against time ; in the bard, who surveys and penetrates ; in the mother, who rebels and takes revenge, but who is deprived of her avenging power through her sympathy ; in the girl, who breaks with her father because of her faith ; in the lover, who is burdened with an unhappy love. He understood the motives of all the characters and pleaded everyone's cause. But a play which is written for the mediocre, who have ready-made opinions about everything, must at least be partial to a couple of its characters in order to win the

* In his autobiography he uses his first Christian name : Johan, and speaks of himself in the third person.

ordinary audience which is always passionate and partial. Johan could not do this, for he did not believe in absolute right or wrong, for the simple reason that all these conceptions are relative. One can be right in regard to the future and wrong in respect to the present; one is wrong this year, but considered right next year; the father may think that the son is right, whilst the mother thinks him wrong; the daughter has the right to love whomsoever she loves, but the father thinks her wrong in loving a heathen. This was doubt. Why do men hate and despise the doubter? Because doubt is evolution, and Society hates evolution because it disturbs the peace, but doubt is true humanity and will end in equity of judgment. The stupid only are certain, the ignorant only believe that they have found truth. But peace is happiness, and pietists therefore seek it in the peace of stupidity. It is said that doubt consumes the power of action, but is it then better to act without considering and weighing the consequences of the act? The animal and the savage act blindly, obeying lusts and impulses, thereby being like men of action."

Life at Upsala was strangely changed. The

royal patronage endowed August with a distinction, the pleasure of which was evident. The sense of freedom from the pressure of poverty, of having achieved some measure of success, expanded his chest and straightened his back. His friends did not recognise him. They were accustomed to see in August the poor half-starved, erratic youth who needed their help. (In unconsciously looking down, we add to our self-respect.) August no longer needed the pity which had given pleasure to givers and recipient, and the result was disharmony. The *Rune* was weakened through indifference and internal strife, and died naturally, a victim of competition.

August's good fortune was not of long duration. He, the rebel, the destroyer of common idols and conventions, had not hesitated to receive the King's gift. For he had never believed that the ills of the world would be set right by the abolition of monarchy, and in the King's gift he saw not the grace of the ruler, but recognition accorded to him by a personal friend and admirer. But he soon began to chafe under the obligations and restrictions which his new position entailed. At the end of the term he manfully struggled through his examination in philology, astro-

nomy and sociology. During the next term his mental restlessness became acute. The brain was filled with creative energy, and the path of learning was blocked. Doubt and apathy chilled his efforts to do the work which was expected of him. Sometimes he lay all day on a sofa, longing to be free and in the midst of life. He felt imprisoned by the royal stipend and sought succour in reading the history of philosophy. But the different systems seemed to him to possess the same degree of validity, and his head was replete with his own thoughts.

One evening he evoked the anger of one of the professors by attacking Dante. He declared the composition of the *Commedia* to be an imitation of Albericus' vision, and Dante's greatness to be over-rated. Dante was ignorant of Greek, therefore uncultured; he was no philosopher, as he suppressed thought by revelation; he was a foolish monk who sent unbaptised children to hell. He lacked all self-criticism when he classed ingratitude to friends and treason to one's country among the worst of crimes, whilst he himself sent his friend and teacher, Brunetto Latini, to the nether world and supported the German Emperor Henry VII against his native town, Florence.

He showed bad taste, for amongst the six greatest poets of the world, he placed Homer, Horace, Lucanus, Ovid, Virgil and—himself.

The result of these observations was that Strindberg was dismissed as insolent and crazy.

A period of increased mental distress and uncertainty followed upon the explosion. The town was grey and dirty, and the chill of winter lay over the land. There was no stability in his soul—he felt as if it had been dissolved, and hovered as a sensitive smoke around him. A forcible new impression pulled him together. One day he found his friend, the naturalist, painting as a recreation. This was something that would condense and support an evaporating ego. To paint green landscape in the midst of dull winter, and to hang it on one's wall—that was something worth doing!

"Is it difficult to paint?" he asked.

"No, it is easier than drawing. Try it," was the reply.

August borrowed an easel, brushes and paint, locked his door and gave himself up to colour-worship. When he saw the blue colour give the effect of a clear sky he was enraptured, and when he conjured up green

bushes and a lawn on the canvas, "he was inexpressibly happy—as if he had eaten hashish."

One day, when he had locked himself in, he heard a conversation between his friends outside the door. They talked as if they were discussing someone who was ill.

"Now he is painting too!" said one of the friends in a tone of deep depression.

August reflected and came to the conclusion that he was going mad. Fearing compulsory incarceration, he wrote to the manager of a private asylum in which the patients were allowed their liberty and to till the soil. He expressed his willingness to submit to the curative principles of the institution. The reply was kind and reassuring. The manager had made inquiries about the would-be patient and found that there was no need for extreme steps.

Three months passed and the second instalment of the royal stipend was not paid. A letter of humble inquiry brought the reply that His Majesty had never meant to give permanent support to Strindberg, and that it was only a question of temporary help. A further sum was enclosed, as His Majesty had graciously decided to help his protégé once more.

The first sense of relief was followed by some anxiety as to the consequences. The King's promise was no mistake. The real explanation of the "disgrace" was not easy to find. Some thought the King had forgotten; others that his proverbial generosity had exceeded his means. Ten years later Strindberg heard that he had been wrongfully accused of writing defamatory verses about the King.

He decided to leave Upsala and to seek work in Stockholm as a journalist. At a valedictory gathering of the old friends he thanked them for their contributions to his self, "for a personality is not developed out of itself; out of each soul with which it comes in contact it sucks a drop, like the bee collecting its honey from millions of flowers, transforming it and passing it on as its own."

CHAPTER IV

THE DRAMA OF THE HERETIC

WE may agree with Höffding that "every important individuality is a point of view for the human race, from which men catch sight of possibilities and aspects of existence which would otherwise have escaped them." But we must also acknowledge that the strongest individuality is malleable in the hands of experience, and that contact with humanity wrenches away the mind from cherished points of view.

Though Strindberg was born with defiance of the Decalogue upon his lips, though he lived in perpetual revolt against restraint and intellectual formalism, though he sought above all to think and not to copy, he could not escape that constant pressure of others which is the essential of collective existence.

The University, with its rigid forms of instruction, its standards of learning, had been the cage on the bars of which he had

exercised his muscles of independence. He had craved for freedom; his chronic disgust at the established order had made him fail through paralysis of will, where he might have excelled through natural superiority. And yet he felt strangely *en rapport* with the tradition of the University, when in the spring of 1872 he embarked upon journalism in Stockholm. He went into humble lodgings on borrowed money, and obtained an ill-paid post on a Radical evening paper.

The journalists with whom he now mingled lacked the culture which the University imposes even on its most rebellious alumni. They talked in ready-made phrases and wrote on subjects over which they had no mental mastery. They could harm or help fellow-creatures by the exercise of a power for which they were totally unfitted. Loose-witted and garrulous, they missed central questions and mistook the gossip of the news-hunter for judicial wisdom.

The journalistic profession of that time did not command general respect, and the *littérateurs* of the Radical press were often treated as a species of social brigands. They were nameless and their activities subterraneous, but they wrote "*We*" and held the mole's

power of being able to upset the tilled fields of man.

Strindberg plunged into art-criticism, and exposed Count George von Rosen's famous picture "Erik XIV and Karin Månsdotter," in the National Museum of Stockholm, to the fire of his discontent. The ashes of his own drama on "Erik XIV," which he had burnt, lay over his judgment, and the feeling of identity with the oppressed classes, now revived through associations, made him resent Rosen's conception of Göran Persson, the favourite and evil genius of the mad king. Rosen had painted the sly and intriguing counsellor with a fidelity which was opposed to Strindberg's view of Persson, as an enemy of the nobility and a friend of the people. Rosen's standpoint was therefore condemned in Strindberg's articles, which appeared after some editorial trimming of their literary ornamentation.

A brief but eventful attachment to a ladies' illustrated paper, to which he contributed short stories and biography, increased Strindberg's knowledge of the exigences of journalism and the possibilities for feminine exploitation of the impecunious male.

He chose his friends amongst the artists. They were shabbily dressed, cultivated vile manners, were gloriously illiterate, but they had originality of feeling and thought. Without book-knowledge they had the knack of seizing the essence of life and of settling problems with intuitive accuracy. Strindberg still found solace of mind in painting. It was like singing. The brush and the colours gave shape to his vague imaginings. The post-romanticism of Corot pervaded his circle of friends. The idea that one should paint one's own soul, not stocks and stones, captivated him.

The only value of the impression lay in its fusion with individuality. One should therefore paint from memory, with fantasy.

He always painted the sea with its shore in the foreground, and angry-looking firs, some naked cliffs further out, a white lighthouse and sea-marks. The sky was usually clouded, but at the horizon the clouds broke, and light was let through. He painted sunrise and moonshine, but never clear daylight.

His friends wore long hair, slouch-hats, brightly coloured neckties, and lived like the birds. They dreamt of canvas so large and subjects so great that no studio could con-

tain them. A sculptor had made arrangements with a Norwegian to hew the legendary giant out of the Dovre mountain, a painter was going to reproduce the sea—nothing but the sea—with a horizon so vast that the globular shape of the earth should be made visible.

With two friends of the new life Strindberg talked out his melancholy questionings, and sketched the future of regenerated humanity. One was a painter of thirty who had been an agricultural labourer, and who, after some years' training, had found art an inadequate vehicle for thought, and who now "lived on nothing" but the stimulus of his eclectic philosophy.

The friend's name was "Måns," and he had a remarkable faculty for discovering faulty premises in the fabric of August's *dichtung*. The other friend possessed the steadiness of the well-established social unit, and contributed a dispassionate and polite scepticism to the review of ideas.

They introduced Strindberg to Buckle's theories. There he found support for his rebellion against the scholasticism of Upsala, and learnt that his disease of doubt was in reality the basis of health. Doubt and dis-

content were the pre-requisites of knowledge and progress—the sole paths towards true happiness.

He felt irritated with all that was old and antiquated. Newspapers worked for the hour only, with no thought for the future. He could not read them without spasms of impatience.

The third volume of the autobiography describes his mental tension in the following passages: "His philosophic friend comforted him and calmed him by La Bruyère's saying: 'Do not distress yourself over the stupidity and wickedness of human beings; you may just as well distress yourself over the falling stone; both are subservient to the same laws; to be stupid and to fall.'

"'Yes, it is all very well to say that. But to be a bird and compelled to live in a mine! Air, light, I cannot breathe; not see!' he burst out. 'I am dying of suffocation!'

"'Write,' said his friend.

"'Yes, but what?'"

Out of the mists of doubt, the volatility of convictions, there rose creatures clad in flesh and blood, the warring selves of his multiple personality. The thin silhouettes of history became instinct with life; and Strindberg's

first great drama, *The Heretic*, afterwards named *Master Olof*, was conceived.

He wrote it during two summer months of quiet life on his island in the Baltic. It was necessary to act, for his newspaper had died and food was scarce. His kind friends, the fishermen, gave him credit, and he could concentrate on his task without the haunting anxiety for to-morrow's meals.

Master Olof deals with the Swedish Protestant Reformation. In the personality of Olaus Petri, the Swedish Luther, he had found all the elements needed for an historical drama of the soul's battle and final defeat by the world. Olof, the priest with a message, the fanatic who is willing to live and die for the cause of religious and social reform, surrenders to compromise. As Archbishop Olaus Petri he stands forth as the heretic who had purchased peace at the price of spirituality. The tragedy of enthusiasm, wrecked by the practical issues of life, is the theme of *Master Olof*, and it has seldom found a more intense dramatic expression.

Olaus, with the tongue of fire over his head, called to make war on the superstitions and avarice of the Roman Catholic Church, defies the bishops. He is saved from the

consequences of their wrath by the King, who knows the value of the energy which impels the heresy. In Gustavus Vasa, the prudent King who makes Olof his secretary, Strindberg saw the opportunist, the man of worldly wisdom who neutralises great ideas by skimming their froth and rejecting their substance. Olof follows his light and becomes a conspirator against the King. But the King is stronger than he: caught, punished and pardoned, Olof at last becomes a dutiful servant of the State, and of the conservative powers which keep Society immune against the onslaughts of enthusiasts.

In Gerdt the printer, who urged the young Olof to become a Daniel and to speak the truth before kings, Strindberg saw the revolutionary who is the consistent enemy of compromise. In Olof's mother, who dies in the Catholic faith cursing her heretic son, he hears the eternal cry of the Old stabbed by the New; of the stagnant content that dwells in Woman when it is hurt by the passionate discontent that dwells in Man.

The relativity of truth and its perpetual evolution, the inevitable clashing of faiths and convictions, invest the struggle between mother and son with tragic reality. She has

refused to call his wife anything but a harlot; for is she not living with a priest? She has in vain exerted parental authority to turn her son from the path of perdition. To her, Olof is the apostle of Antichrist, the child in the meshes of Satan, whom passionately she strives to save. "Ask me not," cries Olof to the mother before delivering his heretical sermon. "A mother's prayer can tempt angels in heaven to apostasy."

Two rascally priests pray by her deathbed, their thoughts intent on the bag of gold which tempts their cupidity. She dies comforted by their presence and shrinking from her son's defilement. But death smooths sharp differences, and when her eyes are closed Olof lights the holy candles, places a palm-branch in her hand, and prays for her forgiveness.

The figure of Strindberg's Olaus Petri, burning with religious fervour, proclaiming the true creed of Christ to the people who reply by throwing stones, a reformer who does not perish by his faith but lives by acceptance of common sense, is a contribution to the world's deathless *dramatis personæ*. He is very remote from Shakespeare's Wolsey, and the psychological climax is reversed, but

there is an ecclesiastical magnificence in the two characters which forces comparisons.

There is an impressive simplicity in the language, and the author achieves the highest effects in portraiture with few rhetorical devices. The conflict of personalities makes the drama rich in contrasts, but they are softened by an atmosphere of fatalistic resignation before the irreconcilability of ideas. The characters are all right with the limited measure of rightness which is contained in each soul. They are all wrong with the wrongness which is inseparable from human form. In *Master Olof* Strindberg spoke as Goethe had spoken in *Goetz von Berlichingen*.

Master Olof was written during one of those periods of simple life and isolation which Strindberg sought with the craving of the repentant monk.

Debauch and drunkenness were eschewed, milk took the place of liquids of fermentation. Angling, swimming, fencing and mental gymnastics in the company of three sympathetic friends kept body and mind vigorous.

One of the friends paid his bill and our dramatist returned to town filled with hope and with the sense of relief of one who has at last said what he thinks. The play was sent

to the manager of the Royal Theatre, and its author returned to the palette.

Whilst waiting for the verdict Strindberg sought to "idiotise" himself, and to stifle thought by diligent painting during some weeks. One evening at a gathering of pressmen, the late editor of the dead evening paper told him that the play had been rejected. He felt suddenly ill and had to leave the company.

The next day he heard the reason for the refusal. Gustavus Vasa and Olaus Petri were distorted and degraded. He knew that he had stripped them of their historical and patriotic aureole, and he had deliberately restored their human contours. But such restoration was not welcome, and he was warned that the public did not want it. A thorough revision of the play was recommended.

The bitterness of failure now worked havoc in his soul. He plunged into the study of social problems. He found human folly supreme in principles of government and in the judgment of majorities and minorities. The curse of nescience was upon all flesh.

"His thoughts struggled like fish in the net and ended in entangling themselves," he writes of this mood. He tried to dismiss such

thoughts. But it was impossible. They returned "like a quiet, great sorrow, bringing despair because the world went its way—idiotically, majestically, inevitably—to the devil." A new rôle, that of sceptic, materialist, atheist, seemed to be his own part in the drama of mind. He strove to free himself from prejudices, social, religious, moral and practical, and ceased to read newspapers. For newspapers praised stupidity, mistook acts of egotism for love of humanity, and insulted intelligence.

"He had but one opinion: that everything was wrong; but one conviction: that nothing could be done to make things better at present; but one hope: that some day the time for interference would come, and that things would then improve."

There is something infinitely pathetic in Strindberg's life-long conflict with social injustice and fatuity. He was like a man digging deep for the straggling roots of a large tree. Sometimes he found one, but he could never put his foot on all at the same time. Social evolution, with its infinite variety of hidden forces, which burst into foliage on the tree of good and evil, yielded but few secrets to his spade. He besieged the soil in his hand

with passionate questions and showered curses upon the matter under his muck-rake, but the elusive spirit which makes flowers out of dirt and green life out of black decay escaped him. The scepticism and impetus to transvalue all values which the rejection of *Master Olof* had accelerated were further developed by the company which Strindberg now found congenial. A coterie of artists, writers and dilettantish philosophers assembled in the evenings in the Red Room of "Berns Restaurant." The tone was free, the clamour for truth loud, and contemptuous of the treasures of the past. The company was heterogeneous and disputatious, but held together by an aggressive scepticism which was beautifully sincere. The axiom that the spring of human action is egoism, was the basis of argument, and hypocrisy was hunted down with relentless severity.

The old was to be destroyed and the new created.

"That is ancient," were words of reproach. As new human beings they must think new thoughts, and new thoughts required new language.

Anecdotes and old jokes were cut short. Phrases and borrowed expressions were re-

jected. One was allowed to be coarse and to call things by their proper names, but not to be vulgar, not to quote from the latest comic opera or to use witticisms which had appeared in the last number of the comic paper.

Everything was focussed to strictly personal and independent judgment. Strindberg led the way in destructive criticism. Like Spencer before the old masters, he found the artistic perfection of the past centuries over-rated and superseded. The historical Jesus had been exposed to speculative criticism by scholars, and every tyro in the Red Room had the courage to follow.

But Strindberg defied the art-consciousness of the world by attacking Shakespeare. He knew all his plays, had read them in English, and was familiar with the commentators. He inveighed against the loose and disconnected composition in *Hamlet*, the commonplace characterisation, the weakness of the anti-climax. His sling wanted a Goliath. The blind worship of that which is old and famous roused him to battle. Friends who came from Upsala thought alike and talked alike. They had become parrots who repeated the same views on Raphael and Schiller, automata

from which conventional imitation had plucked every idiosyncrasy.

The happy camaraderie of the Bohemian circle and the race for intellectual independence did not assuage the pangs of physical hunger. After some dinnerless days Strindberg decided to make another attempt to join the profession of his heart. He travelled to Gothenburg on borrowed money, presented himself to the manager of the theatre, and offered his services as actor. His demand for a rehearsal of the play and part which he selected was granted, but he could not command the necessary emotional energy. He was offered an engagement at a small salary, but the condition of waiting for two months before appearing did not commend itself to his impetuous spirit, and he returned dejected to Stockholm. He felt that the charge of changeability which was brought against him was not altogether unjust, and though he was ashamed of his many changes, he could not act otherwise.

The persistence with which Strindberg attempted a theatrical career is strange in view of the lack of self-confidence, with which he was afflicted when face to face with an audience. At viva voce examinations he was

attacked by sudden aphasia, though he knew the answers to the questions. He found difficulty in public speaking, and his linguistic gifts did not help him to speak foreign languages with ease.

In the beginning of 1873 Strindberg found employment as editor of a new paper published in the interests of the insurance system. A less appropriate sphere of activity could scarcely have been devised, but he managed to transform the dry bones of premium and compensation into delectable morsels of brain-food. He penetrated the mysteries of commerce and statistics, studied the relationship between birth-rate and pauperism, and examined Socialism as a solution of economic riddles. But his inability to accommodate himself to existing conditions brought the enterprise to a speedy end. It was never financially sound, and when Strindberg chastised the methods of shipping insurance companies subscriptions began to fall off. A burlesque in which he ridiculed the methods of insolvent companies, and which was privately acted before indignant victims did not add to his popularity as editor. He exposed shams and humbug regardless of consequences. The crash came during the sum-

mer, when Strindberg was seeking peace of mind on his island. A loan had gaily been contracted in the *Riksbank* to meet the costs of publication.

The day of repayment found Strindberg and his friends of the "Red Room" absolutely incapable of paying the debt. The presence of the printer's bill and the absence of the guarantees offered by the various insurance companies brought him to despair. The catastrophe had been precipitated by the carelessness of his coadjutors; Strindberg had honestly done his part to fulfil the obligations of the loan.

Strindberg fell seriously ill with fever. In delirious dreams he was haunted by futile remorse, by angry creditors and subscribers. In his brain-storms he battled with the evil one, who was permitted to bring deception and suffering to innocent humanity whilst God looked on complacently. His illness was followed by ague, which troubled him for many years.

A plan to find Nirvana in the waves ended in the return of the will to live and a liaison with the housekeeper in the cottage.

The friends who shared the cottage with him had left, and Strindberg fell passionately

in love. She had been kind to him during his illness, and he felt drawn towards her by invisible cords which, under the circumstances, spelt tragedy. For after a short time she was unfaithful to him, and he fell a prey to tormenting jealousy.

No human experience passed him by lightly; he was a sensitive subject, who received impressions with painful vividness, and responded with the volcanic intensity of surcharged emotion.

The description which he gives in *In the Red Room* of the psychosis of his jealousy is of much interest:

"But as he walked on the shore, through glades and into the forest, design and colour began to mingle as if he had seen it all through tears. The mental shock, remorse, repentance, shame, began to dissolve him, and consciousness was loosened in its fixtures. Old thoughts about a task unfulfilled, about humanity suffering under mistakes and delusions, arose. Suffering enlarged his ego, the impression that he was fighting an evil power stimulated his resistance into wild defiance; the desire to battle with fate awoke, and from a heap of stakes he thoughtlessly picked up a long pointed stick. In his hand it became a spear and a club.

"He burst into the forest, breaking branches as if he had been fighting its dark giants. He kicked the fungi under his feet as if he were battering in so many empty gnomes' skulls. He yelled as if he were driving wolves and foxes, and opp! opp! opp! echoed the cry through the pine forest.

"At last he came to a rock which rose as an almost perpendicular wall in front of him. He struck it with his spear as if he wished to hew it down, and stormed up its side. Bushes crackled under his hand, and rustled down the mountain, torn up by the roots; stones rolled down; he put his foot on young junipers and whipped them till they lay broken like down-trodden grass. Thus he forced himself up and stood on the top.

"The rocks lay below, and beyond them the sea in an enormous circular view. He breathed as if now at last he had sufficient space. But on the mountain there stood a broken fir which was taller than he. He climbed it, spear in hand, and seated himself astride on the top which formed a saddle. Then he took off his belt, made a noose and hung it round a branch, came down from the tree and picked up a large stone which he placed in the sling.

"Now there was only the sky above him. But beneath him spread the pine forest, head by head, like an army storming his citadel. Beyond it the fjord raged and advanced towards him like cavalry of white cuirassiers; and beyond it lay the naked rocks like a fleet of monitors.

"'Come,' he cried, and brandished his spear, 'come a hundred, come a thousand,' he called. And spurring his high wooden horse he shook his weapon.

"The September wind blew from the fjord, and the sun set. The pine forest below became a murmuring crowd. And now he wanted to speak to them. But they murmured incomprehensible words and answered only 'Wood,' when he spoke to them.

"'Jesus or Barabbas?' he roared. 'Jesus or Barabbas?'

"'Barabbas, of course,' he answered himself, when he listened for an answer.

"Darkness fell, and he felt frightened, dismounted from his saddle, and went home.

"Was he mad? No! He was only a poet who had sung in the forest instead of at the writing-table. But he hoped that he was mad; he wished darkness to extinguish his

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STATUE BY CARL ELDH

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light, for he saw no hope which could illuminate the darkness.

"His consciousness, which saw through the nothingness of life, wanted to see no more. It preferred to live in illusions, like the sick man who wants to believe that he will get well and therefore hopes it!"

Was he mad? The school of psychologists which sees in every manifestation of the *genus irritabile* evidence in favour of a verdict of insanity will conclude that he was. There is urgent need for a psychological restatement of the supernormalities of genius. The wild outbursts of the world's intuitionalists, the devouring fire of their creative passion, must ever remain unintelligible to soul-paupers and to those whose cerebral activities are strictly dependent upon the presence of print. But genius may expect better understanding from those who give careful thought to the processes of mind, and who should have penetrated beyond the definitions of "sane" or "mad." Those who live and die in ignorance of the blessings of Horace's golden mediocrity probably find the compensation which Dryden voiced:

> "There is a pleasure, sure, in being mad,
> Which none but madmen know."

The consciousness of greatness and power which accompanies the unshackling of genius is mistaken for megalomania and contrasted with the accompanying inability to achieve worldly success along well-trodden roads. The result is contempt and ridicule.

Strindberg descended from his peak of glory, and for the seventh time the prodigal son returned to his father's house. He was not welcome. He had proved himself a good-for-nothing, and the family now treated him with open contempt.

Life at home became intolerable and he again fled to the sea. He lived for some time at Sandhamn, amongst pilots and coastguardmen. Acquaintance with the sea-faring life was a tonic to the mind and an incentive to interest in the practical side of life.

"You are twenty-four," said one of these friends to him, "and you are nothing yet. You are surely going to be something, like other people, even if you want to be an author, for one can't live on that."

Wise and timely words. Following his friend's advice, Strindberg aspired to a clerkship in the local telegraph office, and diligently practised the art of the telegraph operator. After a month he was allowed to

send off the weather telegrams. The office routine was somewhat painful, but life amongst honest and hard-working seamen showed him new sides of human character, and the steady sense of duty which keeps the mind placid and happy amidst whirlpools and storms.

Two shipwrecks off the coast supplied material for picturesque and vivid description, which he made use of in letters to *Dagens Nyheter*, one of the daily papers of Stockholm. The letters brought him a good offer of work on the staff of the paper, which he thankfully accepted.

At first everything went smoothly. The editorial office was like an observatory, from which one could study the world and watch history in the making. By inapt comparison between the old University and the potentialities of the new Press, his contempt for the former grew.

The pressman is invested with authority. By the aid of modern inventions and the efficient organisation of the news-service, he is enabled to survey events on the world's stage, and to seize its acting personalities whilst they are still warm with speech. He becomes the central nervous system of pul-

sating humanity; he is expected to interpret its sensory impressions and to enrich the body-social by concepts and opinions. Strindberg saw the power of the Press, and in the anticipatory joy of being able to express himself freely, he buried his old disgust at the wickedness of journalism.

But the peace was short-lived. He was soon taught that one must not aim at too wide a view-point or express oneself too freely. The ideal and the real newspaper are two very different things. The idea that a newspaper must offer its comment and its opinions to the buying and subscribing public in strict conformity with party colour and convention was not one to which he could give loyal allegiance. He reported the debates in the *Riksdag* in such a disrespectful manner that a less critical man had to take his place. He reviewed a Christian journal by declaring that the publisher had incurred a heavy responsibility by spreading such errors, with the result that his editor had to appease the indignant publisher.

He gave vent to highly original views on art, and when allowed to act as dramatic critic of the performances at the Royal Theatre, took the opportunity of paying off

old scores. There were many complaints against him, and he was even threatened with a thrashing by a theatrical company which was smarting under his attacks. It was evident that his services were not appreciated, and Strindberg relieved the newspaper of his embarrassing presence.

Starvation followed, and under the lash of that whip a few months of distasteful work on another paper. This time, he tells us, was a period of bitter want, illness and humiliation. He dared not go home; his friends regarded him with pity and suspicion. The circle of the Red Room was dissolved. Depression and dislike of human society overtook him. There were days when he preferred to go without food to meeting people in the restaurant. On other days he followed the same course through want of money. Sometimes he spent the whole day lying on a sofa, his thoughts spun in a circle which held the hope that death or lunacy would set him free, but, when hunger came in the evening, he was driven out to seek help.

At this time of utter misery there occurred one of those sudden changes of circumstance which are interwoven in the sombre warp and woof of Strindberg's destiny like a thread

of scarlet. Following a friend's advice he had applied for the post of assistant librarian in the Royal Library of Stockholm. His application was successful, and in 1874 he again placed his foot on the step-ladder of social respectability, redeemed by the titles of *Royal* Secretary and "extraordinarie amanuens."

He threw himself into the depths of human thought, contained in the books of which he was now master, with the eagerness of one who is so thirsty that he wants to drink the sea. New passion, new disillusionment. The great problems of life, those that last through centuries and chaff the impotence of the human mind, remained problems. Like a cow chewing the cud, the philosophers of mankind laboured with the same unanswerable questions. Away then from the intellectual fields where the mind is poisoned and left in irremediable misery! His new work demanded a useful and acceptable contribution to the resources of the library.

He undertook to catalogue Chinese Manuscripts, and devoted a year to the study of the Chinese language. When the catalogue was ready, he handed it with a certain pride of victory to the authorities of the library,

for he was now the sinologue of the institution. The ancient culture of the yellow empire attracted him with its atmosphere of somnolent mysticism. It was an opiate to his restlessness. In the Chinese literature he searched for information about Sweden and Swedes, and in the Swedish literature he looked for references to China and its inhabitants.

The result was a "Memoir," which was read at the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Correspondence with sinologues all over the world followed, together with membership of learned societies and a medal from the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. "Thus," Strindberg tells us, "he succeeded in contracting a healthy idiotism which seriously threatened to extinguish all intelligence." He advanced so far on his new path that he even coveted a Russian order.

He was at last somebody and something in the eyes of the world.

Friends recognised him, and saluted him like one who, having been sick and foolish, had tired of his folly, and returned to normal life.

CHAPTER V

MARRIED AND BLASPHEMOUS

STRINDBERG'S relations to women and his three unhappy marriages were the fountain of soul-racking experience from which he emerged, possibly not wiser, but certainly more powerful as an interpreter of himself and of humanity. The women he loved were injured by him, inasmuch as he made their real and imagined failings the subject of brutal biographical romance. The fact that the blame fell upon him, not upon the victims of his conjugal experimentation, would scarcely compensate for the painful publicity with which he punished the women and unburdened himself.

Worthy people have agitated themselves over the question whether Strindberg was a real evil-liver or not. He was certainly an evil-liver in the sense of conventional morality. In giving free play to the impulses of his ever-expanding personality, he played the

colossal egotist and sinned against the laws of God and man. If by evil-liver we understand a craven sensualist or a man beset with Don Juanesque frivolities, he was not one.

There was nothing of the light-hearted immoralist of the comic stage, or the poetic profligacy of Robert Burns, about Strindberg; he acted throughout the heavy tragedian in the inexorable drama of sex-antagonism.

The exemplary husband and the faithful lover are not, as a rule, found among the torchbearers of literature, though few elect to outrage literary decency by minute public dissections of their past loves. *The Confession of a Fool,* which Strindberg himself called "a terrible book," is a nauseating record of his first marriage, in which love and lust, hatred and disgust, adoration and contempt, exultation and misery, are set forth in their psychological relation to a sexual love, the disappointment of which lashed the artist in Strindberg into fury against woman. The ghost of Strindberg's first wife never left his side. In the *Confession* she is portrayed as a beautiful siren with golden hair, adorably small feet and a false heart—a fiend in female form, with the soul of a prostitute and the worst vices of a loathsome debauchee.

She reappears in his dramas *The Father*, *Comrades*, *The Link*; in his stories and essays; in different characters, drawn with a pen dipped in gall, retouched and seen in different perspective, but always the cause of man's degradation or downfall.

Strindberg's first marriage was preceded by a divorce, for his wife Siri von Essen, daughter of Captain Carl Reinhold von Essen, was at the time when Strindberg made her acquaintance the wife of Baron Wrangel, Captain of the Life Guards. The reader of the fourth volume of Strindberg's autobiography, entitled *The Author*, and of *The Confession of a Fool*, receives very different impressions of the author's first experience of matrimony. In the former, which deals with the period 1877–87, there is scant reference to the matrimonial tragedy which is the sole and sordid theme of *The Confession*, which relates to the same period. *The Author* was published in 1887, *The Confession* was written in 1888, a German version published in 1893, and the original French edition in 1894. The reason for the omissions in *The Author* may mercifully be found in the desire to shield living persons in Sweden from the fate of being the central figures in a *chronique*

scandaleuse. *The Confession* has never been published in book-form in Sweden, or in the Swedish language.* A pirated Swedish translation appeared in instalments in a disreputable paper in spite of the author's protest. Throughout his literary warfare Strindberg has shown scant regard for personal feeling, and when he withheld *The Confession* from Swedish readers he probably was conscious of the dire results which would follow upon the publication of his "worst" book. The law-suit following upon the publication of *Married*, in 1884, must have been a warning example. In a letter written from Paris, in 1884, Björnstjerne Björnson relates his impressions of a visit from Strindberg, and refers to the latter's inability to deal with principles and opinions apart from personality.

"He has been a pietist," he writes, "and so he is still, in spite of many experiences—not religiously, but morally. A cause is for him only persons, bring them out, whip them."†

* The first Swedish edition will shortly appear amongst the collected works of Strindberg which are being issued by Messrs. Albert Bonnier.

† *En bok om Strindberg*, af Holger Drachmann, Knut Hamsun, Justin Huntly McCarthy, Björnstjerne Björnson, Jonas Lie, Georg Brandes, etc. (Karlstad, 1894).

In *The Confession* Strindberg's wife is certainly brought out and whipped. But the whipping was preceded by idolatrous adoration.

"He would and he must have a woman to worship," he writes of some innocent *schwärmerei* which was a prelude to the fugue of marriage. "To worship was his weakness, since the idea of God had been obscured. He was too weak to believe in himself, and his sense of reverence, which was given no nourishment as he had lost reverence for everything, found this expression. He had no friends, and he must, therefore, at any price worship, revere, love."

Of the troubled termination of another love episode, which was not so innocent but which served to arouse his yearnings for pure affection, he writes with true Strindbergian absence of erotic humour:

"If he had now been inclined to be a woman-hater he would, of course, not have looked at a woman again, and condemned the whole sex, but he was a woman-worshipper, and, therefore, he immediately found another."

The woman-worshipper in Strindberg was generally silenced by his inseparable twin—the woman-hater. The woman-worshipper

fell in love with the pretty baroness, suffered the torture of the damned in being denied her presence, was enslaved by her "roguish curls, golden as a cornfield on which the sun is shining,"* her willowy figure, her movements full of softness and grace, her elegance in dress, her aristocratic apparition. The woman-hater looked on the "fall" with a sneer, participated with joy-mingled disgust in the intrigue which led to divorce proceedings, hurried marriage, and the premature birth and death of a child, cursed the bondage of ten years of married "hell," and finally related the intimacies of the conjugal struggle in the public confessional in sibilant tones of revenge.

The friendship between the "Royal secretary" and the Baroness began under the happiest circumstances and without any foreshadowing of coming evil. Strindberg was a welcome guest in the family, a trusted friend of husband and wife, a respectful admirer of the girlish mother who, seen by the side of her little girl of three, seemed Madonna-like in her chaste aloofness. The Baroness dreamt of going on the stage, of devoting herself to

* *The Confession of a Fool.* English translation by Ellie Schleussner.

art, to a mission, and of thus gaining individual independence. The theatre became a bridge of union between her and Strindberg. The Baron was a sympathetic listener, a pleasant companion, a gallant soldier, who, though warmly interested in Strindberg's personality and career, could not always suppress a slight condescension in his manner towards him.

The aristocracy of birth and the aristocracy of brain presented themselves to Strindberg in a juxtaposition which threw the superiority of the former into pleasant relief. That class-consciousness, which was peculiarly sensitive in him, invested his friendship with the Baron with a special interest. When visiting him at the guard-house he was not altogether free from a sense of awe and admiration engendered by the atmosphere of military power and aristocratic rule. "A son of the people," he writes, "a descendant of the middle classes, cannot but be impressed by the insignia of the highest power of the land."

Before the bowl of *punsch* he enjoyed a sense of social superiority over the lieutenants, an identity with the ruling forces which was rudely shattered when the conversation turned on the riot of 1868, during which the Guards

had charged into the mob, of which Strindberg had been a red-hearted constituent. When the Captain spoke contemptuously of the mob, "the hatred of race, the hatred of caste, tradition, rose between them like an insurmountable barrier." "As I saw him sitting there," writes Strindberg, "the sword between his knees—a sword of honour, the hilt of which was ornamented with the name and crown of the Royal giver—I felt strongly that our friendship was but an artificial one, the work of a woman, who constituted the only link between us."

The birth of Strindberg's illicit passion for the Baroness was followed by alternate spells of adoration and loathing. The picture which he draws of the struggle is highly characteristic.

He makes his attic into a temple of worship, with azaleas, geraniums and roses, and prepares an altar for the adoration of his Madonna with the child. He places her portrait in a semicircle of flower-pots, with the lamplight full on it, and passes the evenings with blinds drawn down in the Holy of Holies. But the strain becomes unbearable. Another evening he is found in the midst of dissolute friends, a partaker in an orgy of youthful blasphemy

and desecration of love. Amidst bacchanalian invocation of the satanic, he delivers himself of a rhapsody of insults against the adored woman, dissects her in anatomical terms and coarse allusions, and ends the day by sacrificing his woman-worship on the polluted altar of Aphrodite Pandemos. He wants to flee from temptation, and decides to quit Stockholm for Paris. Embarked upon a cargo steamer bound for Havre, after a touching farewell from his two friends, duty's journey is found to be unendurable. He is tormented with loneliness, overcome by the thought of the dreary voyage and the cruel separation from the beloved. A wild desire to escape from the moving prison, to swim to the shore, seizes him. An opportunity for less dramatic flight offers itself; the pilot cutter is about to leave the steamer for the shore. Strindberg impetuously begs the captain to put him ashore, and the latter, suspecting the sanity of the traveller, allows him and his luggage to depart in the cutter. Once ashore and in the quiet seaside place where, the spring before, he had spent happy hours with her the situation becomes awkward. He is ashamed of his weakness; how is his conduct to be explained? After engaging a room at the

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hotel he wanders into the forest and runs amuck among the fir trees and the tender associations of the past, the tears raining down his cheeks, his heart in a turmoil of conflicting emotions. He concludes that he must either die or go out of his mind, and chooses a wilfully contracted pneumonia as the most suitable road to extinction. He undresses by the shore, throws himself into the cold water and swims out into the open sea. After a struggle with the waves, he returns exhausted. Beckoning Fate to do her worst, he then climbs an alder tree in a state of perfect nudity. The icy October gale responds, and, when he descends shivering, he is satisfied with the first part of the expiatory act. Back at the hotel he sends a telegram to the Baron, informing his friends of his illness, goes to bed, and drains a cup of poison in the form of an overdose of the sleeping-draught supplied by the local chemist. The next morning brings the Baron and the anxious Baroness, and a return of rude health which neither gale nor poison could shake.

He returns to Stockholm, and the old life is resumed. Frequent calls on the Baroness, weak struggles to resist, are followed by mutual declarations of love. She visits his

attic and the temple of pure adoration is made profane. Her tender conscience finds excuses in her husband's infidelities, her ardent lover is in the ecstasy of conquest. The husband is told everything. The scandal, the family quarrels, the intermixture of the criticism and condemnation of others which follow expel the sinners from their paradise.

Proceedings to dissolve the marriage are commenced, and the Baroness spends a few weeks in Copenhagen so as to comply with the legal necessity of having " deserted " her husband. On her return to Stockholm she is determined to realise her ideal of going on the stage. She succeeds in obtaining an engagement under the patronage of two famous actors and eventually makes a successful début. The requisite publicity is provided not only by lovers of art, but also by scandal-mongers. The process of disillusionment has begun. The iconoclast is already master of the idolater, and Strindberg sees the disjointed skeleton where a few months ago he saw the beautiful form of a goddess. " Everything was permitted to us now, but temptation had diminished," he writes in illustration of that lurking element of the *macabre* which caused sudden satiety and shattered his love through the

dissociation of his sexual personality. He does not stand by, a passive onlooker of the dissolution; he assists by bitter invective and gross abuse. The ex-Baroness on the stage is no longer to him the virginal mother with whom he had fallen in love; she is an actress "with insolent gestures, bad manners, boastful, overbearing." The sight of the stockings, destined to envelop the feet which a short time ago were heavenly, is now revolting. He notices that her room is untidy, her dress slovenly, that she wears old slippers, and that her gestures are reminiscent of the street. He discovers that he has no desire for her company, that she inspires him with disgust.

Such were the first stages of Strindberg's union with the woman, who has been analysed, divided, multiplied and endowed with every variety of feminine crime in his writings. Eager to fly from "the repulsive heap of offal," to which he likens the whole tragedy of the divorce, he went to Paris in the company of a friend who enjoyed the sudden affluence of a legacy. This time he safely reached his destination, and experienced no uncontrollable impulse to abandon the journey. In Paris he received a letter from

the Baroness, in which she told him that she was about to become a mother and begged him to save her from dishonour.

His love received a fresh stimulus; the shade of the Madonna resumed temporary physical form. Strindberg returned to Stockholm, willing to retrieve the past and mould the future by holy matrimony. The wedding took place in December, 1877. Shortly afterwards a little girl was prematurely born—a weakly infant who died two days later, thereby saving the parents the anxiety of keeping its existence secret.

The unfoldment of the story of Strindberg's first marriage, the tragi-comedy of its rhythm of love and hatred, shows not only incompatibility of temper and a profound spiritual alienation, but his unfitness to bear with equanimity a prolonged period of domestic enslavement. The superficial reader of the unpleasant details of *The Confession* will close the book with Géronte's question on his lips: "*Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?*" The sexual psychology of the book, its profound, though brutal exposure of its author's emotional intemperance, can only be studied in conjunction with the whole of his autobiographical writings. A mood, a phase, a

temper, appertaining to the woman-hater, are seething in *The Confession*, and produce pearls of literary power as well as comicalities, and *bêtises* which are reminiscent of a third-rate French novel.

The Author reveals the idealist in quest of true love, a man who can feel the purity and joy of generative creation, the natural pathos and sacredness of family life.

Of the psychic rearrangement which preceded the birth of the second child, Strindberg writes :

" He received the first certainty with fear. How could he receive and bring up a child, and how would the ideal marriage of his dreams now be realised ? But he accustomed himself to the thought, and the unborn one soon became a personal acquaintance, a beloved guest who was expected, and for whose future he wanted to fight. The wife who hitherto had been a comrade was endowed with another value as mother, and the ugly side of their relationship, which already had been noticeable, disappeared. A great, high mutual interest ennobled the relationship, made it more intimate and roused dormant forces to activity. This time of waiting was more beautiful than the period of the engage-

ment and the honeymoon, and the arrival of the child the most beautiful in his life."

Those who see in Strindberg's attitude towards marriage and women nothing but the ravings of a sacrilegious and obscene mind deliberately shut their eyes to aspirations, such as the above, which, however fleeting, were as much a part of the man's attitude as the profanities which even his warmest panegyrists cannot defend.

Strindberg continues: "When he held the new-born daughter in his arms he felt that the soul only achieves immortality through transformation in a younger body, and that a childless life is a *carnivore* which only eats others without being eaten. But he also experienced a strange feeling of having flowered and gone to seed. He was child again in his child, but he himself felt that he had grown old. He was deposed and there was already a successor in the house."

The feeling of being deposed did not prevent subsequent acts of unimpaired autocracy, but the record of the first rush of feelings of paternal solidarity is of interest in view of the anarchic hostility to the family which Strindberg's writings so often express.

The troubled course of love had not inter-

fered with the rising wave of literary productivity. Before marriage he had continued to write short stories descriptive of coast life, and in addition to his labours as assistant librarian he had obtained fairly remunerative work as an art-critic. He had experienced so much disappointment as a dramatist that he decided to employ another literary form.

In 1877 a collection of short stories appeared, entitled *From Fjärdingen and Svartbäcken*, which described the undergraduates' life at Upsala and caused annoyance by its disclosure of the swamps and pitfalls in the academical training-ground. These twelve sketches, written with directness of phrase and a vividness of description which show keen powers of observation, were met with charges of exaggeration. The superannuated student who spins out a worthless existence in gasconade and song, supplementing the weakness of his mind by a few high-sounding philosophical catch-words; the popular poet who wins applause and friends by impromptu doggerel, stupid and coarse; the refined and sensitive youth who is hated because he is a devotee of outer and inner cleanliness and decorum; the wild spendthrift who smashes windows and extinguishes street-lamps as a

pastime worthy of his caste—these and others are drawn against a background of traditional cant, humbug and soul-destroying lies. Several of the stories have autobiographical patches. There is withal a good-humoured satire, not free from youthful pathos, permeated by sympathy and a personal note of an experience acutely felt. The book is interesting as the first specimen of Strindberg's realistic style as a prosaist. The reviews of the book expressed divergent opinions; Strindberg read them with the composure of one who knows how such views are manufactured.

Rebuffed by the refusal of theatrical managers to accept *Master Olof*, he had re-written it in verse. The new edition was published in 1877, and the reception brought its author bitter disappointment, and fuller experience of the indifference which kills. The critics were silent. They ignored the masterpiece of his youth, and presented a deaf ear to the poetry of the heretic. One paper declared the play to be humbug. His old colleagues of the press-table saw no reason for acclamation.

The satire which had shone with a mellow light in the sketches of Upsala life was fanned into hot flame through contact with the world of Philistines. Determined to speak his mind

untrammelled by accepted standards of literary form, whether poetic or prosaic, historical or modern, he now wrote a novel which he called *The Red Room.* The book was published in 1879, and produced an outburst of anger and admiration. Voltaire's words, "*Rien n'est si désagréable que d'être pendu obscurément,*" had been chosen by Strindberg as a motto for the book and in protest against the treatment he had received. The force and style of *The Red Room* effectively protected its author from continued obscurity. Strindberg's name was made by this book; henceforth it was the war-cry of opposing factions. As a novel the book fails through lack of cohesive development of character-study and events. As a series of sketches of the follies and vanities which permeate the social hierarchy it compels attention by its direct, speaking style, and the singular freshness and spontaneity of its satire. The central figure of the book is Arvid Falk—Strindberg the idealist—a journalist whose contact with the world results in a series of disillusionments. Everything that is dishonest, cruel, banal, hypocritical and vile in the social system is exposed to view in the pages of *The Red Room,* which still, after thirty years, retain their

freshness and the warmth of the burning moral indignation which caused them to be written.

He had found in the depth of the human heart the seven deadly sins, and he traced their poison in every human relationship, under the cloak of respectability, in the qualities which lead to worldly success and honour. Oblique finance, dishonest company-promoting, show philanthropy, unctuous religiosity, servile journalism, create characters which are drawn in bold and dark outline with strongly concentrated colours, but without the exaggeration of which he was accused. The characters are so typical of human weakness and wickedness, the psychological analysis of motives and acts so accurate, that the indictment of the book remains true in spite of changes in social form and personal types. The pompous publisher who grows fat on the brains of young authors, whilst he intimidates them by depreciation; the editor who finds favour with his party and his employers by suppressing every unwelcome truth and spreading every useful party lie; the moneylender who builds up a banking business through exploitation of the financial ruin of others, are contrasted with the unsuccessful and the unworldly.

Amongst the artists and intellectual *dilettanti* who assembled in the Red Room of Berns Restaurant in the evening, and whose hard struggle for bread in the day formed such a sharp contrast to the comfort of the time-servers, Strindberg found the Dionysian madness, without which the sanity of the rest of the world would have been unbearable. There is still life in the making, goodness inviolable, a brotherhood that woos the joy and beauty of life, contemptuous of the badges and labels of Society! But the majority who writhed under his satirical portraiture did not find compensation in his exceptions. For the lightning of his satire had not only played upon the time-worn objects of ridicule—those from which they dissociated themselves with a smile of tolerant amusement—it had illuminated and rent the pillars of Society to which they clung with superstitious respect. Had he not shown how literary and dramatic reputations were made and unmade by the personal ill-will or good-humour of self-constituted critics? Had he not handled the activities of the ancient art-critic, who bestowed automatic praise on all his old friends, and chilly silence on all new painters with merciless severity? Did not

his unseemly badinage with the civil service, and with the well-established routine in governmental departments, stamp him as an enemy of Society ? Some method of silencing him had to be found.

The manner in which the book was written was provocative by its idiomatic phrasing and the naturalness of its scenes—every sentence was charged with revolt against the ultra-academical style which had been the accepted standard of good writing. This was a realism in fiction which was dangerous alike to morals and literary comportment, introduced by a man who proved himself to be master of a new art in words. The anxiety was abated, when some outraged critic hit upon the idea that Strindberg was but an imitator of Zola. This was not true ; the author of *The Red Room* had not read any of Zola's writings, but he had read Dickens—thoroughly—and admired the gentle humour with which the great English novelist unmasked social injustices and their complacent representatives. He had felt a desire to be able to clothe his indictment of Society in similar form. There is little similarity between the writings of Dickens and those of Strindberg ; the latter lacked altogether the

child-like and detached interest with which Dickens watched and chronicled the doings of the amazing people around him.

In Dickens's books there is a distinct line of cleavage between the good and the bad characters. *The Red Room* contains well-marked specimens of both, but most of Strindberg's writings depict the hybrids of good and evil, the psychological complexity in the human struggle for knowledge. As a novelist Strindberg shows some affinity with George Gissing. Strindberg's descriptions of the squalid tragedy of poverty—honest, hopeless, heaven-forsaken poverty—have the same power of spoiling the enjoyment of a good dinner as those of Gissing. In *New Grub Street* Gissing lets Biffen say, "Show the numberless repulsive features of common decent life." The repulsive features of human life generally met with protesting resonance in Strindberg's poignant sensibility; he described them and the result is "unpleasant."

The publication of *The Red Room* was followed by an intense literary activity on the part of its restless author. He had found his tongue, and he had found an audience.

The versatility of mind and production which was the despair of his critics became

apparent. In 1880 *The Secret of the Guild*, a comedy in four acts, was published. The theme of the play is the unsuccessful attempt to complete a church by a guild of masons in Upsala in 1402. For fifty years the work has proceeded, but envy, dishonesty and pride of trade have stood in the way of its completion. The old alderman is deposed and his son becomes master of the work. Jacques, the son, is a man of action, ambitious and unscrupulous, who urges on the work without the cautiousness of old age. The roof is laid, the tower is built, but the secret of success has eluded Jacques. The tower falls as a result of ignorance of the spiritual secret which would have preserved it. "The church was built in sin and therefore it lies in ruins," says the old alderman. The play faithfully reflects the Middle-Age atmosphere, and harmonises with Strindberg's earlier plays in its vivid presentation of the struggle between two generations. Its infusion of faith and Christian symbology had the effect of modifying the storm of execration, with which pious respectability strove to break the author of *The Red Room*.

The performance of *Master Olof* at the Swedish Theatre in 1880 was a great success, and it was no longer possible to ignore Strind-

berg as a dramatist. Revised five times in deference to criticism and technique, the play had at last conquered opposition by the richness of its historical imagination, the splendour of its form and the fiery youthfulness of its treatment of the oldest of spiritual problems. The tardy acknowledgment was balm even to Strindberg's sceptical soul, and the two plays which he now wrote breathed "faith, hope, and charity," as if the gloomy truths of *The Red Room* had been forgotten.

*The Journey of Lucky Peter** satirises humanity and Society in its narrative of what befell Peter who wanted to see the world and taste its luxuries, but like all good fairy-tales the drama ends happily, and Peter regains peace of heart, and finds his dual-soul. And the satire is tempered with a humour, so sympathetic, an understanding of the doers and victims of evil, so delicate, that the reader of this fairy-play puts down the book with a sigh of satisfaction that, after all, the worst experiences in this world prove themselves to be but necessary milestones of the pilgrim's progress. Lucky Peter who discovers the

* The name of this play has been wrongly translated into English. It is generally written of as *The Journal of Lucky Peter*, a mistake which even appears in the *Encyclobædia Britannica*.

nothingness of the rich man's pleasures, of the king's power, the bitterness of fame, the changeability of human institutions! We envy him his rapid liberation from the chains of flesh, the severe tuition under his fairy-teacher. The charm of the play is irresistible; it has the mysterious eventfulness of *Peter Pan* and *The Blue Bird*, but none of the fatuities which often distort plays for children of all ages. Even when he entered fairyland Strindberg could not leave his intelligence behind.

In *Sir Bengt's Wife*, the other play of this period, he gives us an historical drama of marriage, in which love rises triumphant and purified through life's difficulties and misunderstandings. Sir Bengt has fallen in love with the nun who is doing penance for the sinful response of her unruly woman's heart. He delivers her from the tyranny of the abbess, and the wedding festivities promise a life-long feast for the bold knight and his fair lady. But the fates are jealous of so much happiness, such blending of strength and beauty, and disaster overtakes them in the person of the king's bailiff who demands the payment of a heavy fine in consequence of the knight's negligence in not having provided the king with a mounted soldier. Sir Bengt is

unable to pay, and loses his knighthood. The unscrupulous bailiff, who has designs upon Lady Margit, helps Sir Bengt to accept the services of a moneylender by which complete ruin is averted. Sir Bengt conceals his trouble from his bride, and seeks to redeem his position by hard and honest work. A child is born, but the harmony between husband and wife is disturbed through misunderstandings. To Lady Margit the change in her husband is distressing: he works like a peasant, and has become oblivious of the arts and graces of knightly conduct.

One day when, by ignorance and womanish love of the beautiful, she has thwarted his plan for the restitution of his property he lifts his hand to strike her. Protected by the Reformation, which has now been accomplished, she asks the king to dissolve her marriage with a brutal and unworthy man. The wicked bailiff is watching the disruption of the home with satisfaction, and succeeds in gaining Lady Margit's affection. Fortunately she discovers the villainy of his plan, and tastes the reprobation of "the world" in time. The *dénouement* of the play is reached by a reconciliation between husband and wife, following upon the mutual

discovery of sterling merit and the inviolability of marriage, parenthood and home. The simplicity of the love-drama, the inherent goodness of the characters, including the Father Confessor who, to fit the general harmony, kills the phantoms of his lower nature is scarcely Strindbergian. One dominant note rings clear and undefiled through the three plays of this period: the sense of the sacredness of paternity. The pathos and tragedy of fatherhood are interwoven in many of Strindberg's plays, but generally entangled in a multitude of disturbing emotions.

Sir Bengt's Wife was published in 1882, *The Journey of Lucky Peter* in 1883. During the years 1880–82 a work entitled *Old Stockholm** appeared, with Strindberg and Claes Lundin as joint authors. It is a popular and comprehensive account of past customs, institutions and pleasures of the citizens of the capital of Sweden, profusely illustrated. Strindberg had collected the material at the Royal Library, and planned to write the whole work. His health broke down through overwork, and he found it necessary to engage a collaborator.

* A third and unaltered edition of this book, which is now regarded as one of the classical works on the subject, was issued during 1912 (H. Gebers Förlag, Stockholm).

He managed, however, to write entertainingly on guilds and orders, legends and superstitions, street music and amusements, celebration of Christmas and Easter, slang, fauna and flora of the city of his birth. *The Red Room* had already shown Strindberg's keen observation of the character and peculiarities of Stockholm life; the *genius loci* had in him a faithful, though not always flattering, *raconteur*. In *Old Stockholm* the comprehensiveness of his knowledge of the history of the Swedish capital became apparent.

The solidity of his antiquarian and historical research brought him an offer to write a popular history of Swedish culture which he accepted, on condition that the independence of his historical sense should not be suppressed. Having prepared his material he was lost in philosophical speculation over the absence of an intelligent connection between cause and effect. "Was not history a capricious muddle, a walk in a circle? Had not civilisations risen and perished, social systems appeared and disappeared, religions changed and men remained unwise and unhappy?" He succeeded in contracting his point of view, and wrote his history with the intention of

counteracting the prevalent method of viewing historical events through the medium of privileged personages. Others had over-rated the personal factor. Strindberg admits that he under-rated it. *The Swedish People* met with angry criticism and resentment of the sceptical manner in which time-worn and honoured tenets were treated.

The reception of *The Swedish People* aroused the powers of satire which had been lulled to sleep during a temporary spell of optimism. The warm and sunny atmosphere, in which the warrior had rested, gave place to storm and thunder, and Strindberg gathered his force for a fresh attack on Society. This time he disdained the form of the novel which, though thin and undeveloped, had yet made it possible for some of the parties arraigned to dismiss *The Red Room* as a piece of clever but fantastic fiction.

The New Kingdom, which appeared in 1882, is a series of satirical descriptions of the ideals and conduct of the inhabitants of the "new kingdom" which was supposed to have been created by the Swedish constitution of 1865. The book is an attack upon everything that average humanity holds dear; the scorching satire plays like lightning

upon royalty, militarism, history, aristocracy, bureaucracy, the press, the theatre, and, with special annihilative pleasure, on the Swedish Academy. It was impossible to deny that Strindberg had descended from generalisations to portraiture, that well-known and highly-respected personages had been pilloried and caricatured. Affronted Society declared the book to be simply a lampoon on spotless individuals. Though the personal attacks were doubtless in bad form, and, though there are passages in the book which strain ridicule to the point of the grotesque and the vulgar, the brilliant wit, the profusion of ideas, and, above all, the incomparably good temper place *The New Kingdom* in the forefront of contemporary satirical writings. The genre of Grenville Murray's *Les Hommes du Second Empire* had suggested the form. An affinity with Max Nordau is noticeable in certain chapters, and especially in that on "The Official Lie"; but Strindberg's exposure of conventional hypocrisy and social humbug is achieved by a tempestuous outburst, compared with which Nordau's strictures seem a discursive and spiritless sermon.

The year which saw the storm of *The New Kingdom* also witnessed more moderate winds

in the first instalment of *Swedish Destinies and Adventures*, a collection of stories in historical setting which showed Strindberg as an interpreter of the genial and peaceful aspects of life, as a humorous onlooker whose memory is stored with pictures of the kaleidoscopic reign of joy and sorrow, sin and virtue. Now and then the fresh narrative is oppressed by a distant rumble of the preacher who finds it difficult to suppress his views on women, political economy and over-rated civilisation.

Swedish Destinies and Adventures had reconciled the critics to Strindberg's existence. There was talent—undoubtedly; there was a mine of creative imagination; there was a calm current of lyrical content which the wild torrents of satire and abuse had not swallowed. Perhaps he might yet be redeemed, tamed to run a less dangerous and offensive literary course?

The praise won by the historical stories was cut short by the appearance in 1883 of *Poems in Verse and Prose*. The novelist, the historian, the dramatist in Strindberg had stood aside to let the poet speak. And the poet spoke in words which were a challenge to the phrase-mongers and the purists, in hot and rugged verse which acted like an over-dose

of pepper on the jaded literary palate. There were lapses of metre, there were faults of rhythm, but the energy of thought sustained the poet on a height from which the custodians of formal rhyme could not dislodge him. If De Quincey's differentiation between the literature of power and the literature of knowledge be applied to Strindberg's first volume of poems there can be little doubt as to the category to which they belong.

The most typical poems of the series are "Loke's Blasphemies," in which he lets Loke, the enemy of the deities of Northern mythology, sing his own song of defiance and contempt for the "Gods of time"; and "Different Weapons," a finely cut satire on the way his literary executioners had avoided open duel and resorted to secret poison. The poet introduced his work by a militant preface, in which he declared that he was a challenger who was forced to employ the weapons chosen by his opponents. He stated that the poetic form imposes unnecessary fetters on thought, and is, therefore, destined to fall into disuse. "Stronger spirits have formerly broken them, but dared not throw them away. The mediocrities of our time dare not place such bad verse on the Christmas market as that written

by our great poets. In this respect, i.e. the writing of bad verse, I dare compare myself with the greatest without danger of contradiction." He intimated that the metrical blemishes were deliberate sacrifices of form to thought, and left his detractors to believe or disbelieve in his theoretical perfection as a poet.

Tired after so many battles, so many literary peregrinations, Strindberg had left Sweden before the publication of his poems. He settled in Paris with his family, and, with the industry of mind which in him was identical with life, proceeded to study the intellectual and artistic resources of the "gay" city. The result was the conviction that a large town should not be likened to the heart of a body, but to an abscess which corrupts the blood and poisons the system.

The most important event during Strindberg's stay in Paris was probably his contact with Björnson. A friendship sprang up between the two Scandinavian rebels which was rich in sympathy and exchange of ideas. In *The Author* Strindberg gives us his impressions of Björnson, and Björnson has written an interesting description of Strindberg.* Strindberg

* *En Bok om Strindberg* (Karlstad, 1894).

found Björnson a complex of personalities, consisting of the preacher, the peasant, the theatrical manager and the good child. Björnson found Strindberg young throughout, at home everywhere, free everywhere, an incurable idealist in whose eye something sinister battled with something roguish.

By the side of the massive Norwegian Strindberg experienced an unusual sense of security which developed into filial love.

Björnson's democratic drama *The King* had been attacked as lese-majestie and a political scandal. They had many experiences in common, were relatives in thought. Björnson in exile appealed to whatever vestige of hero-worship was left in Strindberg's soul. Suffering from nervous depletion, and in a generally weakened state of health, he adopted a deferential attitude towards Björnson which, being foreign to his temperament, was logically bound to be followed by emancipation. Early in their intercourse Strindberg had made the characteristic discovery that he was endowed with greater knowledge and a more incisive understanding than Björnson. Björnson begged Strindberg to be less personal in his satire, apparently unconscious of the extremely personal nature of his own

attacks upon the common enemy. The tie of friendship was gradually loosened, until Björnson's rôle of "conscience" and father confessor came to an abrupt end in 1884.

Strindberg was content to dwell for a time amongst the *literati* of different nationalities who had assembled in Paris. Free from the stings of the bourgeois wasps upon whose nest he had trampled, he enjoyed the fresh air and the keen winds in the great republic of mind. Like other men he knew the exhilaration which follows upon the *jeu d'esprit* in the highways of thought, the intellectual union which rejuvenates and fatigues by its fertility. But unlike most men he soon tired of even the best company, and the craving for solitude and independence became imperative.

Paris was deserted for Lausanne. In a little châlet by the shore of the lake he recovered physical strength and mental poise. The sight of the Alps acted as a tonic to his nervous system, and solitary morning walks on the shore brought him the stillness of mind out of which new faith is moulded. The way to Rousseau was straight and easy; the peace of Nature, the sinlessness, the simplicity of the peasant's life, as compared with the

vitiated conditions of town labour, impressed themselves on his thought. The diseases of mind and body, caused by the unnatural oppression of civilisation, were amenable to treatment, more practical than satire, and more human than the loathing with which he had decried the false gods and the vulgar tyrants. The remedies were to be found in a combined "return to Nature," and reorganisation of the conditions of labour. Socialism, internationalism, the theories of a broad and humanitarian outlook upon industrial processes of development which tend towards a more equal distribution of wealth and power, now fed Strindberg's hunger after social righteousness. He attempted to throw off national limitations; to feel and act as a European with pan-national sympathies and interests.

The peace movement presented itself to him as one of the greatest thoughts of the time. In his youth he had felt at one with the proletariat, trampled down by the hoofs of militarism. In his satirical writings the peacocks of the social fowl-yard—the proud bearers of epaulets and tinsel—had received a full share of his attention. In Switzerland he came into contact with the organised peace movement, and the result was the novel

Remorse, a powerful analysis of the mental torture endured by a German officer who in obeying orders has caused three innocent Frenchmen to be shot. The inhumanity of war and the reality of human brotherhood are here presented in a manner which makes the story a stirring, yet delicately artistic appeal against the horrors of the battlefield. Whilst he thus placed himself in the ranks of the world's peace-makers the struggle with the sex-problem, from which he never wholly escaped, developed into a battle, the noise of which was destined to reverberate through his whole life. During the summer of 1884—whilst exposed to the unromantic surroundings of a Swiss mountain *pensionnat*—he wrote twelve stories of married life, to which he gave the innocuous title *Married*. They were published in Stockholm in September by Herr Bonnier, and had the effect of a bomb thrown amidst sleepy and contented people—contented to be rid of the enemy. The book was eagerly read by everyone, by the high priests of morality as well as by libertines; it sent shudders of indignation through the respectability which covers vice and sin with silence, and called forth shouts of delight from the champions of "free" morals. It was de-

nounced as indecent, and as a grave danger to the youth of Sweden by representatives of religion and education. The Queen of Sweden read the book and came to the conclusion that it was injurious to morality and offensive to religion. She was undoubtedly sincere in her condemnation, whilst the majority who joined the hue and cry against Strindberg were but tainted reflections of the purity upon which they prided themselves. This time the author of *The Red Room* and *The New Kingdom* had placed himself within reach of the law. Within a fortnight of the publication of *Married* the book was impounded, and proceedings were instituted against the publisher.

But it was not the indecency which was the subject of legal proceedings. It was the sacrilegious handling of Holy Communion in the first story, entitled "The Reward of Virtue," which afforded the opportunity for legal repression. True to the irreverent impulse which owed its origin to the ecclesiastical preparations in the sexton's kitchen, Strindberg had vented his feelings of opposition to the tenets of Christianity in a tasteless sentence. It recorded the commercial value of the wafers and the wine and ridiculed the

"insolent fraud" which enabled the priest to foist these articles of commerce on the congregation, as the flesh and blood of the "Agitator" who was executed more than 1800 years ago.

The story, which to a great extent was autobiographical, dealt with the alleged evils of chastity in a youth and consequent declination of mental faculties. The problems of puberty, which Wedekind subsequently dramatised with tragic force in *Frühlings Erwachen*, were amongst the painful experiences which Strindberg dwelt upon in his autobiography. In *Married* the conflict between Nature and virtue is falsely presented. The auxiliary influences of moral and physical culture are ignored.

Some stories treat of love and marriage, of the transformation of raptures and idylls into painful struggles for the maintenance of the family, of helpless young men captured in the economic trap of matrimony, of the monotony of daily domestic drudgery which makes fretful wives and impatient husbands out of ardent Romeos and dreamy Juliets. There are squabbles and reconciliations, there are scenes and *intérieurs* in the comedy of marriage, to which the stories bear witness

with little regard for the usual restraint of description. The characters are life-like types of Swedish middle-class society. They have been drawn with a realism which shows them as the pathetic puppets of marital fate, or as the unreflecting fools of sexual idealism. There is the deft touch of Maupassant in the rendering of love's irony, there is the inevitableness of Balzac and—in the " indecencies " —not a little of Boccaccio's mirth of imagination.

Withal there is an absence of the cynicism which is a general characteristic of Strindberg's writings on sexual love ; we get a surfeit of realism, but we also get pages of playful and almost tender sympathy with love's happiness and sweet illusion. The story of a young couple's improvident marriage, of their enjoyment of the home with its brand-new things—from the sky-blue quilts to the well-cut glasses—of the careless happiness which is young and foolish, and forgets all about work and duty and the wolves without until the birth of the child and bankruptcy disturb the dream, is an imperishable gem of human description. And the story of the crotchety and greedy old bachelor of irreproachable private life and well-timed per-

missible vices, who finally marries and becomes an ideal husband and a doting father, is proof of the author's recognition of family-life as a bridge between egotism and altruism.

The youth who falls in love with the blossoming girl of fourteen, and is compelled to postpone marriage until he joins his fate to the faded and sickly woman of twenty-four, with a worm-eaten nose (who ever saw anyone with a worm-eaten nose? Strindberg's strength of expression is embarrassing), spends married life in vain languishing for the perished beauty of fourteen. Finally—and when too late—he discovers that the lost angel has all the time been by his side, though disguised in ungainliness of form and feature. The story is a miniature of man's earthly conduct. The child is always the apotheosis of sexual union, the redeemer of the petty nature of husband and wife. The woman who shouts "I am not your servant" to the exasperated husband does so because she is not sanctified by motherliness. Though the primitive fidelity with which Strindberg sketches his matrimonial types, jars on our sensibilities through ineptitudes of diction and occasional vulgarisms, though we feel irritated with his bone-

Photo by G. Florman, Stockholm

Photo by Lina Jonn, Lund

1884 AUGUST STRINDBERG 1897

less and martyrised husbands, *Married* is at once a work of art, and a plea for the super-marriage which is yet to come.

When the news of the action against the publisher of *Married* reached Strindberg in Switzerland, he hesitated as to the right course to pursue. He considered the charge of blasphemy to be merely a peg on which his enemies had hung their long-suppressed lust for revenge. The efforts to suppress the book as a pornographic publication had proved futile and absurd, and had served to show well-intentioned people that realism is not necessarily rank immorality. He resented the attack on freedom of religious thought. On discovering that the Swedish law punishes denial of the pure Lutheran doctrine with two years' hard labour, he reflected that, if the law were enforced Jews, Roman Catholics, Unitarians, Methodists and Baptists would all be incarcerated in Långholmen—the prison in which certain newspapers in Stockholm had already joyfully deposited their image of Strindberg. To plead guilty to the charge of blasphemy was to admit the existence of a legitimate censorship on thought and religious conviction which he denied. But the publisher was in danger of being punished,

and Strindberg could not stand by whilst a scapegoat suffered the penalty of his transgressions. A letter of protest against the proceedings had been ignored. Another letter to the authorities, in which Strindberg formally admitted his authorship, was followed by the request that he should appear personally before the Court. A consultation in Geneva with Herr Bonnier, junior, followed, and as there seemed little doubt that the publisher would be found guilty, if the author shirked his responsibility for any motive whatever, Strindberg left for Stockholm.

He received warnings on the way, gloomy prophecies that the prisoner's cell was the ultimate destination of his journey. On arriving in Stockholm on October 2nd, he was met at the station by an inquisitive and admiring crowd. There were cries for a speech as he stepped out of the train amid cheers. Did this mean that there were friends as well as enemies awaiting him? He was not, after all, a *vox clamantis in deserto*. There were supporters and sympathisers ready for his message. Standing on the platform, amid the bustle and noise of the station, he addressed the people on the meaning and object of his realism. Within a few minutes he

experienced the vicissitudes of the "leader" of a movement: acclaimed by some and insulted by others, he reached his hotel opposite the station amidst the excitement which is meat unto the agitator and dross to the thinker.

In the evening there was a special performance of *The Journey of Lucky Peter* which the author was invited to attend. At the theatre he was the centre of interest, the object of inquisitive glances. The public cheered him again—was it possible that he too had a following, a circle of responsive souls willing to stand by him in the struggle for new thought? But no, the sceptic within him did not believe in this adulation. "No, I am no good as a 'great' man," he reflected. "I can never learn to believe in cheers. They cheer to-day and boo to-morrow!'"

During the weeks that followed he had ample opportunity for philosophical studies of the cheering-booing propensity of human nature. The violent attacks in the Conservative press had all the psychological elements of the booing which is an essential stimulus to continued self-satisfaction and placid Phariseeism; the cheering which echoed from another quarter was not always attuned to

the highest aspirations of the hero of the moment.

The trial of the case was painful to Strindberg. He had none of the qualities which make men revel in loud publicity. Despite the character of his writings, and the war which he had waged with his pen, he had all the personal reserve of the sensitive and the recluse. On November 17th the jury found a verdict of "Not guilty" for the author and publisher of *Married*. His friends cheered, working men in the street cheered and triumphantly escorted Strindberg to his hotel. The victory over the enemies of "free speech" was celebrated in the evening by a banquet, and on the following day Strindberg left Stockholm for Geneva, where he joined his wife.

In Sweden the controversy ran high. *Married* was once more on sale. It was stated that no less than 3500 copies of the book had been sold during the short interval between the day of publication and the confiscation.

The advertisement provided by the prosecution now ensured the widest publicity for the book. Pedagogues and moralists saw not only a grave danger to the youth of Sweden in the circulation of the book, but

the cause of actual and deplorable corruption amongst the boys in public schools. A pamphlet entitled *Strindberg - Literature and Immorality amongst Schoolboys*, by John Personne, a master in one of the Stockholm public schools, is a curious document in proof of the animosity against Strindberg which at this time possessed many excellent people. Herr Personne claimed to have personal knowledge of the evil wrought by Strindberg's theories, and his pages bristle with indignation. He flouts the idea that Strindberg is a man of courage, and accuses him of supplying indecencies at a good price. He inveighs against the "satanical tricks" by which this "literary ragamuffin" makes vice appear identical with joy, thereby luring boys to destruction. One need not be a pedant in matters of moral perception to sympathise with Herr Personne's motive, despite the acerbity which characterises his ebullitions. Whatever may be said for realism in the description of sexual struggles from the artistic and scientific points of view, it has yet to be proved that youth benefits by free access to the wares offered by the *l'art pour l'art* vendors of life's intimacies.

The feminists joined the schoolmasters in

bitter denunciation of Strindberg, though, as yet, there was none of the radical opposition to every phase of woman's emancipation which developed with deepening experience of conjugal misery. The first volume of *Married* was, it is true, written as a protest against the "sickly" deification of the liberty of woman underlying the *Nora-Cult.* In opposing Ibsen, whom Strindberg calls "the famous Norwegian blue-stocking," he had carried out what to him was a sacred duty. But the preface to *Married* contained views on the rights of women which, but for the general commotion, would have preserved the writer from the charge of uncompromising enmity towards the souls of women. After analysing the cause of unhappy marriages in some epigrammatic pages, he slaughters the "romantic monstrosity" which is Ibsen's Nora, and presents his scheme for the future regeneration of woman under the title *Woman's Rights.*

The first of these is the right to have the same educational advantages as man. There is to be wholesale educational reform from which class and sex differences are to be eliminated; "unnecessary" learning is to be abolished and the substitute is to be found in a univer-

sal citizen's examination—a degree of social competency requiring the arts of reading, writing, arithmetic and elementary knowledge of the laws of one's country, with appreciation of the duties and rights of citizenship. To this curriculum one living foreign language will be added, but there will not be time for much more, for "the future will require every citizen to earn his living by manual labour in accordance with the law of nature." The regeneration of woman and the reform of marriage are thus—according to August Strindberg of 1884—inseparably bound up with socialistic hopes of equality.

In co-education he sees the remedy for the insipid gallantry and sex mystification which are responsible for so many pangs of disillusionment after marriage. He wishes the theoretical equality of the sexes to be enforced in the relations between brothers and sisters. A girl should not expect a boy to give up his seat to her, and a brother should not count upon his sisters for the restoration of missing buttons and other creature comforts. And, last but not least, he proclaims *Votes for Women* as the prerogative of the enlightened woman of the future! We may, therefore, claim indulgence for the woman-

hater's life-long growl of discontent against the feminine sex, for, underlying all his dislike of the present, there was a radiant vision of the future. There are propositions in this preface which should satisfy even the most consistent advocates of votes for women. "Woman shall be eligible for election to every occupation," writes Strindberg; in marriage she is to retain her own name and not, as now, be a feminine appendix ignominiously tacked on to the man; she is to be master of her own body, and of the choice of motherhood. Of the spiritual functions of motherhood he writes:

"Is anyone wiser or more fit to rule than an old mother who, through motherhood and the household, has learnt to reign and to administer?" Through the influence of the mother, he continues, "customs and laws will be softened, for no one has learnt forgivingness as a mother, no one knows as she does how patient, how indulgent one must be with erring human children."

Whilst the waves of the Strindberg storm were beating against the breakwater of Swedish society, the author of paradoxes was working out his own matrimonial fate in Geneva and Paris. His dreams of a better future took form in *Real Utopias*, published

in 1885, a collection of stories in which the socialistic and utilitarian solution of heart-rending problems is presented in a novelistic form which shows Strindberg at his best. The style is instinct with a tender pity for human suffering; there is a keen sense of character, and a wealth of exuberant descriptive warmth which are in sharp contrast with the meagre and stunted sociology to which they have been made subservient. They show the addition of a new string to his lyre, a tone of southern richness which accentuates the superiority of the artist in Strindberg to the social philosopher.

At the age of thirty-seven he gathers the riches of his experiences—external and internal—sits down to draw up an account with life and writes his *Autobiography*. The first three volumes deal with the period 1849–79, and were published during 1886. During the same year the second part of *Married* appeared —in many respects the antithesis of the first. After a prolonged plunge into the depths of subjectivity, Strindberg rose endowed with a new creative force. He had spoken that which was within him, and through the process of self-renewal which followed he attained his highest powers as artist.

CHAPTER VI

THE ARTIST

WHILST fighting the battle of realism in fiction Strindberg had prepared the dramatic form which was to be his contribution to the "new" theatre, on which the curtain was about to rise. The demand for a new dramatic art had become imperative. Tired of the admonitions and stale declamations of the old rhetorical play, the public had asked for a representation of life. Dumas *père* had responded by writing the drama of personality, Dumas *fils* by establishing the play of moral problems. Ibsen had built the psychological play on the foundation of Dumas and had endowed the Norwegian language with a new sonority. Scribe had supplied fine technique and neat carpentry for the new French stage, but Paris, the petulant playgoer, sighed for other things.

Zola raised the cry of naturalism. The artificial plots of Dumas, Augier and Sardou

were to be superseded by dramatic flashes of reality. "I yearn for life, with its shiver, its breath and its strength; I long for life as it is," cried the author of *Thérèse Raquin*, and Strindberg responded. In September, 1887, *The Father* was published, the first of the series of naturalistic plays through which Strindberg's European reputation as a modern dramatist and a woman-hater was established. The institution in the same year of the Théâtre Libre, by M. André Antoine, provided a stage which was wholly adapted to the revolt against old-fashioned theatricality.

M. Antoine was an employee at the gas-works who had a passionate faith in realistic drama. With a group of sympathetic *dilettanti* he began evening performances in a large room in Place Pigalle without the stage mechanism of the commercial theatre. Success attended the enthusiastic players, and the performances at the Théâtre Libre became the rendezvous of the intellectual and artistic world which gravitates to Paris. The soul of the enterprise, M. Antoine, was manager, actor, scene-painter, and mechanic. The theatre was semi-private. Special invitation cards to elect audiences protected

the actors from the attention of gallery-opinion. The actors and authors of the new plays were the hosts in this home of dramatic revolution, where every original playwright was welcome. Strindberg's *The Father*, *Lady Julie* and *Creditors* were amongst the first plays produced, and he, therefore, had the satisfaction of being played in Paris before any appearance on the French stage of the "famous Norwegian blue-stocking." Tolstoy's *Powers of Darkness*, Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*, Emile Fabre's *L'Argent*, an adaptation of the brothers de Goncourt's *Sœur Philomène* and Villiers' "*L'Evasion*," belonged to the early repertoire. *Ghosts* was the first of Ibsen's plays to appear; it was followed by *Rosmersholm*. The Théâtre Libre lasted eight years. It had time to create a "modernity" in taste and dramatic expression which produced similar free theatres in Berlin and London, and a vogue of naturalism which included every variety of "life," and which, occasionally, gave undue preference to lubricity and morbidity.

The Swedish edition of *The Father* was followed by a French edition, containing a sympathetic prefatory letter by Zola. The three acts of this tragedy present a drawn-out

duel between man and woman for the possession of the soul of the child. The father, a cavalry captain, is intellectual, serious, studious, lovable. His wife is stupid, selfish and diabolically resourceful in the choice of weapons for the final defeat of the ill-used man. He is mentally poisoned by the suggestion that he is not the father of the child. Laura, the wife, has herself administered the poison in order to shatter the man's peace of mind, and break the foundation of his love for the child. Her hatred knows no bounds. She not only seeks to drive him mad, but contrives by skilful intrigue to procure evidence of his insanity. She informs the doctor that her husband suffers from extraordinary delusions regarding the uncertainty of paternity, and that he talks of little else. When the doctor meets the Captain the question which is eating his mind shows itself as an obsessing idea. Everybody and everything conspires to make the man appear a raving lunatic. Finally, even the old nurse who has been a true and good woman is induced to betray him. He believes in her kindness of heart, and allows her to approach him. She slips the strait-jacket over him, thereby adding the last link to the chain of feminine treachery

and cruelty which has enslaved him. Subjugated, robbed of his faith and his mind, the man dies—the victim of woman.

In the preface Zola expressed his interest in the boldness of the idea. "Your Laura," he wrote, "is woman as she is in her conceit and in her mystical unconsciousness of her qualities and faults." *The Father* was one of the few dramatic works which had the power of moving him deeply. But he found a certain want of reality in the characters and the construction of the play. The nameless captain and his cruel entourage were thought-forms, lacking the solid dimensions which Zola identified with reality. In a critical appreciation of Strindberg, published in 1894, Georg Brandes praised *The Father* as a tragedy of concentrated energy, magnificent in its composition and powerful in its effect. "There is something eternal in *The Father*," he writes, "an unforgettable psychology of woman, showing typically feminine weakness and vice." Brandes thinks the symbolism of the final scene, in which the man of intellect is ruined by woman, inherently true. He adds: "The strength of the indignation and the hatred which have produced the drama are impressive. This tragedy is a cry of anguish

which clings to one's memory, which grips and terrifies through the depth of the passionate suffering that uttered the cry."

Laura may be regarded as the most complete type of Strindberg's Inferno-women. She has not even the *beauté du diable* which creates an illusion of goodness in some of his types. She is the man-eater, the destroyer of all that is noble, consistent, progressive in man. Strindberg sees a cannibalistic tendency in woman which makes marriage a feast of horror, and this is a theme to which he often returns. In *The Father* the distraught man says to his child: "You see, I am a cannibal, and I will eat you. Your mother wanted to eat me, but she could not. I am Saturn who ate his children, because it had been prophesied that they would eat him. To eat or to be eaten? That is the question. If I do not eat you, you will eat me, and you have already showed me your teeth." . . .

The callous egotism with which Laura kills her husband is shown by the following words, with which she assaults him: "Now you have fulfilled your function as an unfortunately necessary father and bread-winner, you are not needed any longer, and you must go. You must go, since you have realised that my

intellect is as strong as my will, and since you will not stay to acknowledge it."

It is perhaps not unnatural that the Captain should throw a lighted lamp at Laura after listening to this speech. But the speech itself is certainly unnatural, and would be more in keeping with the sentiments of a female spider—if that callous insect could formulate her generative philosophy—than those of a woman. As a self-expository wife Laura severely taxes our credulity.

*Lady Julie** is a different type. She is the pretty, neurotic, sensual, useless woman, blue-blooded and empty-minded, destined to total extinction in the process of natural selection. Her tragedy is unfolded in a play of one act, which is the quintessence of Strindberg as a

* *Fröken Julie*, the Swedish name of this play, has been translated into English as "Miss Juliet" and "Miss Julia." The meaning of the Swedish title and the idea of the play are more faithfully rendered by the title *Lady Julie*. In the choice of a title for his feminine type of aristocratic degeneracy, Strindberg was probably influenced by Anna Maria Lenngren's *Fröken Juliana*, a well-known satirical poem on a similar subject which belongs to classical Swedish literature. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century the title "Fröken" was exclusively used when addressing the unmarried daughters of the hereditary nobility of Sweden. An unmarried daughter of a Swedish count is a countess, though she is addressed as "Fröken." Upon marriage with a commoner she may use or drop her title.

"naturalistic" dramatist. The scene is laid in the Count's kitchen. The Count's daughter, Lady Julie, is alone in the house with Jean, the valet, and Christine, the cook. It is St. John's Eve; the farm hands belonging to the estate are assembled for the annual midsummer dance. They do not dance in the kitchen, but there is midsummer madness in the air. Christine is betrothed to Jean who treats the products of her culinary art with epicurean disdain. He knows his value as a man and a servant. Jean is an excellent valet, well-made, well-behaved, who knows when to show self-confidence and when to cringe. Lady Julie has graced the servants' dance with her presence. She has favoured Jean with such marked attention that the people have begun to gossip. Alone with him in the kitchen she encourages him to make love to her. The valet is uneasy; the man is eager to make himself master of the Count's daughter, but the servant shrinks from the sacrilege. But Lady Julie taunts him with his unmanliness, tempts him with her beauty, and the effervescence of her highly-strung nerves. A strange love-scene follows.

The sound of approaching country-folk forces Jean and Lady Julie to hide from their

prying eyes. They do not wish to be found alone in the kitchen. Jean's room is near at hand and becomes their refuge, whilst the peasants make the kitchen the scene of their midsummer merry-making.

When the kitchen is deserted, Lady Julie and Jean reappear. There is an autumnal chill in the air. For Lady Julie is no longer Lady Julie. The valet is master. They are both conscious of the monstrous breach of social etiquette which has been committed. And the grey dawn will not only bring the shame of day, but the home-coming of the Count.

Jean is chivalrous. He proposes immediate flight to Switzerland or the Italian lakes. There, he thinks, they can start an hotel—a first-class hotel for first-class guests. He waxes enthusiastic over the joys of the hotel-owner. She will be mistress of the house, queen of the accounts, before whom the guests will humbly lay their gold.

She cannot rise to his enthusiasm. She wants the comfort of love :

Julie. That is all very fine. But, Jean, you must give me courage. Say that you love me. Come and take me in your arms.

Jean (*hesitating*). I would like to, but I dare not.

Not here in this house. I love you without doubt. Can you doubt it?

Julie (*shyly, with true womanly feeling*). You! Say "thou" to me. Between us there are no longer any barriers. Say "thou."

Jean (*troubled*). I cannot. There are still barriers between us so long as we remain in this house. There is the past, there is the Count. I have never met anyone who compelled such respect from me. I have only to see his gloves lying on a chair to feel quite small. I have only to hear his bell, and I start like a shying horse. And when I now look at his boots, standing there so stiff and stately, it is as if something made my back bend. (*He kicks the boots.*) Superstition, prejudice which have been driven into us from childhood, but which may be as easily forgotten again. If you will only come into another country, into a republic, people will cringe before my porter's livery. People shall cringe, but I shall not cringe. I was not born to cringe, for there is stuff in me; there is character in me; and if once I grip the lowest branch, you shall watch me climb. To-day I am a lackey, but next year I am a proprietor; in ten years I shall be independent, and then I go to Roumania and get myself an order. I can—mark well I say I *can*—die a count.

Julie. Fine, fine!

Jean. Ah, in Roumania a man can buy a count's title, and then you will be a countess—my countess.

Julie. What do I care for what I have cast aside!

Say that you love me, or else—ah, what am I else?

Jean. I will say it a thousand times—later on. But not here. And, above all, no sentimentality, or all is lost. We must keep cool like sensible people. (*He takes out a cigar, cuts the end, and lights it.*) Sit down there, and I will sit here, and then we can chat as if nothing had happened.

Julie (*in despair*). Oh, my God! Have you no feelings?

Jean. I! Why, there is no one more sensitive than I, but I can command my feelings.

Julie. A short time ago you would have kissed my shoe, and now——

Jean (*coldly*). Yes, before. But now we have something else to think about.

They cannot flee without money. Jean suggests that she can steal the necessary sum in her father's room. He taunts her with her weakness until she robs her father. They prepare to leave the house. The girl wants to bring her greenfinch. Infuriated by her sentimentality, Jean snatches the bird from her and kills it. The man's brutality and meanness are suddenly revealed to her; her brain reels under the humiliation which she has brought upon herself. She hurls curses at the head of the impudent domestic. The morning has come, and Christine enters the

kitchen on her way to church. The girl appeals to her, seeks her sympathy, but Christine's feelings of propriety are too shocked to allow of any pity for the fallen girl. She leaves them. The Count returns. They hear him in his room, know that he will discover the theft. His daughter is half demented with fear, remorse, shame; she is incapable of deciding what to do. Jean's servant-conscience has been awakened by the arrival of his master. The Count is there to command, Jean to obey. And when Lady Julie wants him to tell her what to do he hands her a razor—with the complacency with which he might hand his mistress the riding-whip. She leaves the kitchen and kills herself.

Such are the outlines of this painful play, the most "successful" of Strindberg's naturalistic dramas. Again we have a struggle between man and woman, but this time the opposites of class and blood are added to those of sex. The healthy egotism, the common instincts of self-preservation in the valet endow him with a physical stability against which Lady Julie's emotions break like foam against a rock. She goes, he remains. Like *The Admirable Crichton*, Jean knows that there must be masters and servants in this world

of inequality, and, though his passions for once mastered his conviction, he is soundly submissive to social law and order. In Lady Julie, Strindberg has sketched the useless, unnatural, pleasure-loving, hysterical woman of the leisured classes whom he detests.

In the preface to the play he analyses this type of woman. "Lady Julie is a modern character," he writes, "not as if the half-woman, the man-hater, had not existed in all times, but because she has now been discovered, has appeared on the scene, and created a disturbance." In such women he sees a danger to the race, for, as a rule, they attract degenerate men, and transmit their own misery to another generation. They sell themselves for "power, decorations, distinctions, diplomas," and produce beings of undecided sex to whom life is useless. For such psycho-pathological creatures Strindberg sees no hope beyond that of elimination through contact with reality (Jean was "reality" to Lady Julie), or a fatal outburst of long-suppressed sexual instincts. "The type is tragic," he concludes, "offering the spectacle of a desperate struggle against nature; tragic as a romantic inheritance which is now being destroyed by the naturalism which only seeks

happiness; and only strong and good species are compatible with happiness."

Justin McCarthy translated *Lady Julie* into English, and expressed his admiration for the unalloyed realism of the piece in an article in *The Fortnightly Review*. The mental intensity with which Strindberg visualised the character of Lady Julie is strangely impressive. There is no extravagant or jejune theorising; it is drama vehemently conceived and true to its creator. But the horror which moved Justin McCarthy when reading the play, and which most readers experience, is a product of Strindberg's peculiar misogyny which, for the purposes of the play, he coupled with the ordinary standard of convention and morality. Lady Julie's disgrace is unpardonable from the point of view of society. She dies in deference to its verdict. We cannot imagine a drama by Strindberg, in which tragedy is woven out of the misconduct of a Lord Julius instead of a Lady Julie. A young "blood," neurotic, suffering from ennui, and seeking temporary distraction in the company of Jeanne, the valet's daughter, would not have inspired a naturalistic drama of sex and caste. There is a wealth of material which can be used to *épater le bourgeois* in the idea of a

well-bred woman's precipitous "return to nature." The commonplace spectacle of a similar descent on the part of a well-bred man affords none.

In *Comrades* we meet the type of woman who surpasses *Lady Julie* in anti-social attributes. Laura is something of a female tigress, the mother whose claws are ready to tear all but the cub; Lady Julie, with her hysteria and her caprices is still the womanly woman. But Bertha who is united to her "comrade" Axel in a marriage of equality is worse than they. She is plain, mannish, ambitious; a mental parasite who suppresses her womanhood and simulates her husband's talents. The rival of man, the unsexed, simian-brained shrew, Strindberg's *bête noire*.

Comrades is a four-act comedy of marriage. Axel Alberg and his wife are Swedish painters in Paris. They have each painted a picture which has been submitted to the Salon. In Act I we find Axel at work in the studio. He is a good fellow, honest, painstaking, generous. Friends call and discover his embarrassing position as a married comrade. There is the doctor, mature in experience and philosophical in outlook, who when Axel asks him if he does not believe in woman answers: "No, I

don't. But I love her." There is the sensible, matter-of-fact Lieutenant Starck, who will stand no nonsense from women, and whose happy, normal wife knows that woman's real happiness is found in subjection unto her husband. They are shocked to hear of Bertha's tastes and habits. Bertha comes home. She has kept her nude male model waiting, and her poor husband has had to pay five francs in consequence of her unpunctuality. This is a small part of the sacrifices he has made for her artistic career. In the scenes that follow we see Bertha insisting on keeping the household accounts, though her head cannot grapple with the simplest problems of addition and subtraction. She has made false entries, and deliberately deceives Axel as to the manner in which the funds of the comradeship are expended. She coquettes with Willmer, a young writer, and receives presents from him. Intent upon securing the acceptance of her picture, she makes nefarious use of Axel's love for her.

Bertha. Will you be very kind to me? Very?

Axel. I always want to be kind to you, my dear.

Bertha. Do you? Look here, you know Roubey, don't you?

Axel. Yes, I met him in Vienna, and we became good friends.

Bertha. You know that he is a member of the jury?

Axel. Well, what about that?

Bertha. Yes, now you will be angry. I know it.

Axel. If you know it, don't make me angry.

Bertha (*caresses him*). You won't sacrifice anything for your wife—nothing.

Axel. Go and beg? No, that I won't do.

Bertha. Not for yourself, for your picture will probably be accepted all the same, but for your wife?

Axel. Don't ask me.

Bertha. I should really never ask anything of you.

Axel. Yes, things which I can do without sacrificing . . .

Bertha. Your manly pride.

Axel. Let us leave it at that.

Bertha. But I should sacrifice my womanly pride, if I could help you.

Axel. You have no pride.

Bertha. Axel!

Axel. There, there, forgive me.

Bertha. I am sure you are jealous of me. I am sure you would not like my picture to be accepted.

Axel. Nothing would delight me more, I assure you, Bertha.

Bertha. Would it also delight you if I were accepted and you were refused?

Axel. I must feel (*laying his hand on his heart*).

I am sure it would be an unpleasant feeling—sure. Both because I paint better than you, and because . . .

Bertha. Say it straight out,—because I am a woman.

Axel. Yes, also for that reason. It is strange, but I have a feeling as if you women were intruders, forcing your way in and demanding the spoils of the battle which we men have fought whilst you sat by the fireside. Forgive me, Bertha, for saying this, but such thoughts come to me.

Bertha. You are just like all other men, exactly.

Axel. Like all other men. I hope so.

Bertha. And lately you have assumed such superiority; you used not to be like that.

Axel. I suppose that is because I am superior. Do something which we men have not already done.

Bertha. What! What are you saying? Are you not ashamed?

Bertha changes her tone, and plays the humble comrade who is sorely in need of a little encouragement. Axel rejects her arguments, but eventually goes to Monsieur Roubey. During Axel's absence a letter arrives containing the information that his picture has been refused. Bertha guesses its contents and revels in the luxury of pity and *schadenfreude.* Axel returns, after finding Madame Roubey at home, (a meeting cleverly

foreseen by Bertha) with the news that Bertha's picture has already been accepted. He congratulates Bertha on her success. He is confident that his picture will also be accepted. She hands him the letter. The *scène de rupture* is inevitable.

Axel (*lays his hand on his heart and sits down*). What . . . (*controls himself*). This is a blow which I did not expect. This is most unpleasant.

Bertha. Well, perhaps I can help you now.

Axel. You look as if you enjoyed my defeat, Bertha. Oh, I feel a great hatred of you stirring within me!

Bertha. I look happy, perhaps, because I have had a success, but when one is tied to a man who cannot rejoice in one's happiness it is difficult to feel sorry when he is unhappy.

Axel. I don't know what has happened, but it seems to me that we have become enemies now. The struggle for a position has come between us, and we can no longer be friends.

Bertha. Does not your sense of justice tell you that the one who was most competent won the battle?

Axel. You were not the most competent.

Bertha. But the jury thought so.

Axel. The jury? But you know very well that you cannot paint as well as I do.

Bertha. Are you sure of that?

The dialogue that follows is a crescendo of the sex-against-sex quarrel. "A comrade," concludes Axel, "is a more or less loyal competitor, but we are enemies." Bertha, selfish, mean, inebriated by her triumph, goes out to celebrate her victory in the company of friends. Axel stays at home to nurse his sorrow. The curtain descends upon the dejected husband begging his wife not to come home drunk.

Act II shows us Bertha usurping Axel's place as teacher. She finds fault with his technique, and snatches the brush out of his hand to show him how to paint. Her puny mind reels with the desire to humiliate him. Malicious tongues have whispered that he has painted her picture, that he has good-humouredly let her reap the honour of his toil. Bertha is casting about for a means of crushing Axel for ever. To-morrow they will give an evening-party. Her friend Abel—another of the emancipated, heartless, false, perverse, masculine women of artistic "Bohemia"—makes a welcome suggestion. Why not arrange to have Axel's rejected picture sent home at the very hour when their friends are assembled in the studio? The idea fascinates Bertha, but she dare not be re-

sponsible. "I should like it to be done, but I don't want to be concerned in it," she says. "I want to stand guiltless and to be able to swear that I am innocent." And Abel undertakes to manage the matter.

The sex-war reaches its climax in Act III. Axel has torn himself free from the meshes of his decaying love. Now he knows Bertha as she really is. He has discovered her dishonest book-keeping, her money transactions with Willmer, her insidious efforts to emasculate his soul—he realises the full horror of her short hair, and of their union. He has broken his marriage-vows, and throws down the wedding-ring. He is free. But Bertha's malignity clings to him :

Bertha. And this, all this noble revenge, simply because you were inferior to me.

Axel. I was your superior when I painted your picture.

Bertha. When you painted my picture ! Say that again and I will strike you.

Axel. You who despise brute force are always the first to appeal to it. Strike me if you like.

Bertha (*advancing towards him*). You think I have not the strength.

Axel (*seizing both her wrists and holding them*). No, not that. Are you convinced now that I am

also physically the stronger? Bow down, or I will break you!

Bertha. Dare you strike me?

Axel. Why not? I only know of one reason why I should not.

Bertha. And that is——?

Axel. That you are irresponsible.

Bertha (*struggling to free herself*). Ah, let me go!

Axel. Not until you have begged my pardon. Down on your knees. (*He forces her down with one hand.*) Now look up to me from below. That is your place, the place you yourself have chosen.

Bertha (*gives in*). Axel, Axel, I don't know you any longer. Can this be you who swore to love me, you who begged to be allowed to support me?

Axel. Yes, I was strong then and believed I had strength to do it. But you clipped the hair of my strength while my tired head lay in your lap. During sleep you stole my best blood, and yet enough remains to subdue you. Stand up, and let us have done with speeches. There is business to be talked over. (*Bertha gets up, then sits down on the sofa, weeping.*)

Axel. Why are you crying?

Bertha. I don't know. Perhaps because I am weak.

Axel. You see! I was your strength. When I took back what was my own you had nothing left. You were like a rubber ball which I blew out; when I threw you down you collapsed.

Bertha (*without looking up*). I don't know if it is

as you say, but since we quarrelled my strength has left me. Axel, believe me, I have never felt for you what I now feel.

Axel. Really! What do you feel?

Bertha. I can't say. I don't know if it is love, but . . .

Axel. What do you mean by love? Is it not a secret longing to eat me alive once more? You begin to love me. Why not formerly, when I was good to you? Goodness is stupidity. Let us be wicked. What do you think?

Bertha. Yes, I would rather have you a little wicked than weak. (*Gets up.*) Axel, forgive me, but don't desert me. Love me, oh, love me!

But Axel is not caught again. He consents to allow the party to take place, as if they were still good comrades, but he is determined to obtain a divorce. In Act IV we again meet the happy pair, Starck, Willmer, Abel, Dr. Östermark, the *raisonneur* of the play, and his divorced wife, Mrs. Hall, a dubious middle-aged woman whom Bertha imagines to be a victim of man's brutality and a living argument in favour of the woman's movement. She and Abel have arranged, not only to punish Axel by confronting him with his unsuccessful picture, but to disconcert Dr. Östermark by confronting him with the wife and daughters whom he has not seen for

AUGUST STRINDBERG

PORTRAIT IN OIL BY CHR. KROGH, 1893

PORTRAIT IN OIL BY RICHARD BERGH, 1906

eighteen years. But Bertha's calculations are faulty, as usual. The picture is carried into the studio by order of the *concierge* who has protested against its unexpected appearance at the door. Axel is annoyed. She wants everybody to see the picture, to look at it closely. They do, and it turns out to be Bertha's picture.

The last scenes of the play show us a shame-faced Bertha recovering from the fainting-fit which followed upon the sight of the picture. She knows that Axel has nobly changed the numbers in order to give her a better chance. She knows that circumstances have combined to unmask her completely. He is the stronger, and she offers him her love. Relentless in his masculine strength, Axel shakes her off, turns her out into the street. "You once asked me to forget that you are a woman," he cries, "well, I have forgotten it." She reminds him of a man's duty to his wife. Axel hands her some bank-notes. Bertha departs consoled and Axel goes to meet his mistress. "I want comrades at the *café*, but at home I want my wife," he cries, before the final exit of Bertha.

Comrades has been confounded with the typical *comédie rosse*. But here, as in *Lady*

Julie, the collision of character is presented with the intensity which is possible only when a dramatist treats of a question which to him is vital. One inadequately described as a "tragedy," the other as a "comedy," there is in both plays the pessimistic despair of the absolutely sincere anti-feminist. It raises them high above the facile farce of passion, satiety and change. Bertha is to Strindberg the New Woman—a creature to be shunned and exterminated. Nietzsche thought that the "beautiful and dangerous cat," which is woman, should never be visited without a whip. Strindberg would not only bring the whip, but poison to the defeminised monster who wishes to be the rival of man.

In *Comrades* the dramatist presents his characters with that ironical smile which is the condiment of life's bitter draughts. There is a general consciousness of *blague* pervading the studio. The doctor who finds the wife, on whom he once lavished a romantic love, a drunken slattern, her daughters in a second union in the service of vice, helps the reeling woman out of the house and expresses his feelings thus: "Oh, Dolce Napoli! Joy of life, where art thou? Went away as she did. Such was the bride of my youth! . . . Oh,

Dolce Napoli! I wonder if the cholera-sick fishing harbour is so sweet, after all! Blague probably. Blague, Blague! Brides, love, Naples, *joie de vivre*, ancient, modern, liberal, conservative, ideal, real, natural—blague. Blague all the way."

Creditors is a one-act play in which we meet the erotic woman, the alluring, treacherous, unmoral creature of instinct and passion, who battens on men's souls—in short, the vampire. After the *blague* of *Comrades* the anguish of *Creditors*. There are two men and one woman in the piece. Tekla has been married to Adolf, a painter, for seven years. Adolf adores her—their love has been a ceaseless giving on his part. He has merged his personality in hers, he has laid his art as a sacrifice on the altar of his devotion. He has thought of her, painted her, modelled her, given her the treasures of his mind, filled her soul until his own is empty, and now he is weak whilst she is strong. They are staying at the seaside place, to which they come every summer. Tekla has been away for a week when the curtain rises on Adolf engaged in modelling the figure of his wife. He is a nervous wreck, semi-epileptic, with crutches by his side. He is talking confidentially to Gustaf, whose

acquaintance he has made during Tekla's absence. He does not know that Gustaf is the husband from whom Tekla was separated before he married her, does not know that Gustaf is the *creditor* to whom they are both in debt. Gustaf induces Adolf to tell the story of his married life, of his sacrifices, his self-effacement, his reckless giving. He subtly leads Adolf to realise Tekla's voracious egotism, her falseness, her voluptuousness, plays upon his jealousy, rouses his suspicions, wrecks his peace of mind. Adolf is fascinated against his will by the force and coolly analysing mind of Gustaf. He cannot understand why there is something in Gustaf's manner of speaking, and in his eye which reminds him of Tekla. Gustaf replies that Tekla and he may be distant relatives, as are all human beings.

They discuss Tekla's first husband. Adolf has never seen him, but knows that he is an idiot, for Tekla has written a book in which the ridiculous man is described. Gustaf shows Adolf that he is treated as the second idiot by Tekla. He asks why Tekla sent away her child. Adolf hesitates to tell his friend, then confesses that at the age of three the child showed a likeness to the first husband

which Tekla found unendurable. Gustaf asks Adolf if he has never felt jealous of the first husband. "Would it not nauseate you to meet him when out for a walk, when his eyes on your Tekla would say to you: We instead of I—*We?*" Adolf admits that the thought has haunted him. Gustaf draws a picture of the torment caused by the indelible memory of the third. "But they know that *one* sees them in the darkness—and then they are frightened and in their fright the figure of the absent one begins to haunt them, to assume dimensions, to change until he becomes a nightmare disturbing their sleep of love, a creditor who knocks at the door, and they see his black hand between theirs, they hear his grating voice in the silence of the night which should only be disturbed by their beating pulses. He does not prevent their union, but he disturbs their happiness. And when they feel his invisible power of disturbing their happiness, when at last they flee—but flee in vain from the memory which persecutes them—from the debt they have left behind, and the judgment which frightens them, they lack the strength to bear their transgression and find a scapegoat which must be slaughtered. . . ."

Tortured by the suggestion that Tekla has now been unfaithful to him, which every sentence spoken by Gustaf drives more deeply into the inflamed brain, Adolf consents to test Tekla's fidelity by means devised by Gustaf. When she comes home Adolf is to study her manner, and lead her to reveal her real self, whilst Gustaf listens in another room. When the husband has reached the limit of his power of deduction he is to go out, and leave to Gustaf the rôle of inquisitor. Adolf is to be a secret witness of the second examination. He can hear all in the adjoining room.

Tekla comes home. She is playful, loving, treats him as her naughty child—just as Gustaf said she would, if guilty. She has enjoyed herself, and Adolf's solemn tones of reproach and impending disaster cause a revulsion of feeling, in which she shows herself as the heartless coquette, the *mangeuse d'hommes*, to whom conjugal monotony is insupportably dull. Adolf goads her vanity by saying that she has reached the age, when admirers are no longer troublesome. She wishes to assure him of the contrary, warns him, threatens that in future he will have to play the ridiculous part of the jealous and

deceived husband who, lacking evidence, can only injure himself.

Adolf tells her that her plumes are borrowed, that he has endowed her with sense, electrified her once empty brain, made her famous by his pictures and his deification. She concludes that he means to tell her that he has written her books. The rhythm of the quarrel rises until Axel, in the throes of an approaching fit, cries: "Be quiet. Leave me. You destroy my brain with your clumsy pincers—you thrust your claws in my thoughts and tear them to pieces."

At the sight of Axel's condition Tekla grows tender. He recovers, and she makes him beg her forgiveness. After summoning his remaining strength he leaves her. Gustaf enters the room. There is a touching scene of recognition, embarrassment and assurances of mutual respect. The virile mind of Gustaf soothes Tekla's overwrought nerves. She allows him to understand that her present husband is feeble, backboneless, and unreasonably jealous.

They revive memories. Gustaf observes that she still wears the ear-rings which he gave her. The magnetism of old associations, old regrets, draws them together. Gustaf

puts his arm round her waist ; she resists and confesses herself afraid of his presence. She does not wish to do any real wrong to Adolf, for she knows that he loves her. But Gustaf knows more than she does. He shows her the torn pieces of her photograph, thrown on the floor by Adolf some time before. He makes her see clearly that Adolf treats her with contempt. He begs her to liberate herself from Adolf's sick fancies, and to come back to the man of will. Some scruples, a short struggle, and she promises to meet him in the evening when Adolf will be away.

The sound of something falling comes from the adjoining room. Gustaf assures her that it is nothing—probably a dog that has been locked up. But Tekla is smitten with sudden understanding. She sees through Gustaf's plot, knows that her husband has heard everything. The horrible revenge of the man she betrayed revolts her, yet impresses her by its diabolical consistency. Gustaf is about to leave her, declaring that the debt has been paid, when the door is opened, and Adolf appears, deadly pale, a cut across the cheek, his eyes vacant, and foaming at the mouth. He falls. Tekla throws herself over the body, from which life is fast ebbing. " Adolf, my

beloved child, say that you are alive, forgive, forgive. Oh, God! he does not hear, he is dead. Oh, God in Heaven!" And the curtain falls as Gustaf exclaims: "Really, she loves him too! Poor thing!"

Creditors has added an important psychological factor to Strindberg's usual duel of sex. Here we have, not only the sinful nature of woman, the instinctive selfishness, the absence of moral sense, but the operation of a mysterious law of unity, which assists in the downfall of the woman and the victory of the stronger man. Tekla, once mother of Gustaf's child, is held to him by cords of a sympathy which may be called physiological, and which constitutes nature's irrefrangible banns of marriage.

The thesis has since been fully developed in Paul Hervieu's *Le Dédale.* Here the dissonance of divorce and re-marriage resounds through a highly artistic presentment of the conflict between religion, morality, affection and "nature." Marianne de Pogis has left Max, her husband, because of his infidelities. She re-marries and finds in Le Breuil, her second husband, the virtues which her former husband lacked. Her child by the first marriage falls ill, and she meets her first

husband by its bedside. She remains in his house to nurse the child, and succumbs to the old love which has never died. The end is tragic. She cannot go back to Le Breuil. Hervieu cuts short the agony of three souls by the death of the two men. Le Breuil kills Max and himself; together they go over the rock into the foaming waters where human passion is extinguished. Strindberg also summons death as the only solution of Adolf's martyrdom, but, with characteristic sense of the hideous interminableness of life's complexities, leaves Tekla and Gustaf to loathe the tie which they cannot break. Gustaf is the strong man who, knowing woman, despises her and masters her. Adolf is the woman-worshipper, the slave who has sold his masculine birthright for worthless favours. He is killed by disillusionment.

The production of *The Father*, *Lady Julie*, and *Creditors* at the Théâtre Libre was followed by their performance at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre in Paris, another experimental theatre which was founded in 1893 by M. Lugné-Poë. *Lady Julie* was part of the early repertory of the Freie Bühne, an advanced playhouse which had been established in Berlin in 1889 to meet the demand for realism on the stage.

The Father and *Creditors* were performed in Copenhagen in 1889, and the latter play was soon presented at the Residenz Theater in Berlin. The Independent Theatre in London, founded by Mr. J. T. Grein in 1891, introduced Ibsenism to England, and suffered the penalty of the pioneer. Strindbergism might have wrecked the undertaking before the work was accomplished. Mr. Grein's services to the British playgoer have not yet been fully appreciated. He broke one or two windows in the suffocating theatre of banalities and bon-bon amours. Thanks to his courage we can now enjoy an increased amount of oxygen. But the West-End stage still thrives on airlessness. The popular long-run play, in which the charming actress appears as mannequin for the best costumier, whilst social inanities are paraded as absorbing problems—with a happy ending—contracts the lungs of all who in the drama seek a mirror and a criticism of life. To find modern dramatic art they must perforce go to the sporadic centres of unconventional and non-commercial performances, or to the semi-private stages of societies which fight the prevalent stagnation by bold experimental presentation of new dramatic ideas. Strindberg's plays are practically un-

known in England. The Adelphi Players produced *The Father* in July, 1911, and *Lady Julie* in April, 1912. The Stage Society, which is the descendant of Mr. Grein's Independent Theatre, has played *Creditors*. *The Stronger*, an atmospheric sketch with two characters, of whom the one maintains silence, whilst the other uses her tongue, was acted by Madame Lydia Yavorskaia and Lady Tree in 1909. Of the remainder of the fifty-one plays by which he has encompassed many "schools" of playwriting, evolved new dramatic forms, and tested different methods of expression the British public knows little or nothing.

Naturalism has passed away. The shallow materialism, the false simplicity of presentation, with which it sought to kill romantic methods of dramaturgy, proved fatal. They were found to be as unreal as the old-fashioned conventions of the stage. But there were other qualities in the movement which have not died, but profoundly influenced the character-drawing and scenic development of the modern drama. Hauptmann, Hervieu, Wedekind, Schnitzler, Gorky, Tchekhov have transmuted and individualised the permanent elements of the early realism.

As an exponent of naturalism Strindberg's personality towered high above the first noisy purveyors of what M. Jullien named "slices of life"—some distressingly indigestible. It is true that the fabric of his drama was woven out of the ever-recurring theme of sexual antagonism. He described it with the undertone of personal suffering—the suffering of experience and of pity—with which Tolstoy made his peasants articulate in *Powers of Darkness*, or Henry Becque the ill-used women in *Les Corbeaux*.

But Strindberg's plays are highly "unpleasant," says some defender of the morality of the stage. True, but they are honestly unpleasant. They differ from the popular play of amorous escapades and half-uttered indecencies, as the mountain torrent differs from the garden fountain. They are written by the impelling force of an idea, whilst the conventional immorality play exists in the interests of frivolous entertainment. However much we may disagree with the *leitmotif* in Strindberg's naturalistic plays, and realise the limitations of his theses, we cannot ignore them. And do they not, after all, treat of "love," the obsessing object of dramatic interest from the plaintive demi-monde of

Dumas *fils* to the man-hunting Ann of Bernard Shaw? From Sudermann and Pinero to Schnitzler and Capus, through sentimentalism, conventionalism, and cynicism, the theme persists in absorbing dramatic imagination. Compared with Schnitzler, the prince of amorists, Strindberg's *milieu* is sombre with fateful retribution. Like Strindberg, Schnitzler dramatises the illusion and disillusionment of love; his lovers and mistresses are also on the road to knowledge. The ten couples who pass over the stage in *Reigen* might be sparks from Strindberg's anvil. But on closer inspection we find that there has been no fire. Schnitzler's world is the play-room of the passions, Strindberg's their inferno.

In *Lady Julie* and *Creditors*, both one-act plays and each with only three speaking parts, he created a new dramatic form. He now assailed the old theatre with the same vigour with which he had attacked old social institutions. In the preface to *Lady Julie* he contemptuously writes:

"The theatre has long appeared to me, as art in general, to be a *Biblia Pauperum*, a bible in pictures for those who cannot read writing or print, and the playwright as a lay preacher who disseminates the thoughts of the

period in popular form, so popular that the middle classes, which chiefly fill the theatres, can understand what it is all about without much mental exertion. The theatre has therefore always been a board-school for young people, the half-educated, and women who still possess the primitive capacity for deceiving themselves, and allowing themselves to be deceived, i.e. to accept illusion, receive suggestion from the author."

The influence of Edmond de Goncourt, who called the theatre an exhibition of spouting marionettes and a place for the exercise of educated dogs, can be traced in this passage. Rudimentary, incomplete processes of thought, dependent on imagination, are, concluded Strindberg, necessary to theatrical enjoyment. With the development of reflection, investigation, and the higher mental attributes, decay of pleasure in theatrical performances would follow as the shell drops from the ripe fruit. In the theatrical crisis which raged in Europe at this time (1888), and in the moribund state of drama in England and Germany he saw evidence of an approaching extinction of the theatre.

It would, however, be a mistake to invest these views with a greater seriousness than

they contained. As Henry Becque pointed out in his "Souvenirs," *la fin du théâtre* has repeatedly been proclaimed by dissatisfied critics, without causing the slightest impediment in the ceaseless flow of dramatic production. In the preface to *Le Fils Naturel*, Dumas had compared the moralising functions of the stage to those of the Church. Strindberg replied, twenty years later, by predicting the downfall of both as vehicles of human progress. Hot-headed attacks on the theatre precede the evolution of new dramatic forms; they are the outcome of the modernity which is ever at war with methods which have become classic. "To save the theatre, the theatre must be destroyed, the actors and actresses must all die of the plague," is the sweeping verdict of Eleonora Duse,* but there is no disparagement in the reflection that the melancholy prophecies are often uttered by dramatists who are misunderstood and rejected. In Anton Tchekhov's *The Seagull*, published in 1900, the familiar protest is heard: "To me the theatre of to-day," says the poet Constantine, through whom the author speaks, "is no more than an antiquated prejudice, a dull routine." He pro-

* *Studies in Seven Arts*, by Arthur Symons.

tests against the trivialities, the commonplace morality, the repeated dishing up of the same story in a thousand varieties. He wants to flee, as Maupassant fled from the Eiffel Tower. Each malcontent finds solution in his own new method of drama. Rousseau's letter to d'Alembert contains the genuine criticism of the theatre, with which no born dramatist can sympathise. From the effect of fostering artificial emotions, of indulging in sham joys and sorrows, there is no escape through improvement of dramatic form. Whether for good or ill it remains with us. But there is happily little danger of the rationality, in which Strindberg saw the doom of the theatre.

The choice of naturalistic subjects was to be a contributing factor in the process of rationalism. Of the painful impression created by *Lady Julie* Strindberg writes:

"When I chose this subject from life, just as it was told to me some years ago when it stirred me deeply, I found it suitable for a tragedy, for it still makes a painful impression to see a happily placed individual go to the wall, and still more to see a family die out. But the time may come when we shall be sufficiently evolved and en-

lightened to contemplate with indifference the coarse, cynical, and heartless drama which life offers, when we have laid aside the inferior and unreliable registration-machines which we call feelings, and which will be superfluous and injurious when our organs of judgment are fully developed. . . .

"The fact that my tragedy makes a sad impression on many is the fault of the many. When we become strong, as were the first French revolutionaries, it will make an exclusively pleasant and cheerful impression to see the royal parks cleared of rotting, superannuated trees which have too long stood in the way of others with equal right to vegetate their full life-time; it will make a good impression in the same sense as does the sight of the death of an incurable.

"The reproach was levelled against my tragedy, *The Father*, that it was so sad, as though one wanted merry tragedies. People clamour for the joy of life, and theatrical managers order farces, as though the joy of life consisted in being foolish, and in describing people as if they were each and all afflicted with St. Vitus's Dance or idiocy. I find the joy of life in the powerful, cruel struggle of life, and my enjoyment in discovering some-

thing, in learning something. Therefore I have chosen an unusual, though instructive, case, in other words, an exception, but a great exception which confirms the rule, and which is sure to offend the lovers of the banal. The simple brain will further be shocked by the fact that my motives behind the action are not simple, and that there is not one view alone to be taken of it. An event in life—and this is a comparatively new discovery—is generally produced by a whole series of more or less deep-seated motives, but the spectator chooses for the most part the one which is easiest for him to grasp, or the one most advantageous to the reputation of his judgment. Take a case of suicide as an example. 'Bad business,' says the bourgeois. 'Unhappy love!' say the women. 'Sickness!' says the disease-ridden man. 'Shattered hopes!' the bankrupt. But it is possible that the motives lay in all of these causes, or in none, and that the dead man hid the real one by putting forward another which has thrown a more favourable light on his memory."

In an essay entitled *On Modern Drama and the Modern Theatre*, written in March, 1889, and published in the first volume of a collection of plays and essays under the title *Things*

Printed and Unprinted, Strindberg proclaims the regenerating powers of the Naturalistic Theatre in the following words:

"Let us have a theatre, where we can be horrified by the horrible, where we can laugh at what is laughable, play with playthings; where we can see everything without being shocked, if that which has hitherto been concealed behind theological and æsthetical hangings is revealed. Though old, conventional laws may have to be broken, let us have a free theatre, where everything is admitted except the talentless, the hypocritical and the stupid."

He distinguishes between true and false naturalism, and deprecates the commonplace dulness of the subject chosen by Henry Becque in *Les Corbeaux*. To Strindberg the choice of such subjects depends on a soullessness or a lack of temperament, which must bore the spectator instead of stimulate him. He calls such a dramatic method simple photography which "includes everything, even the speck of dust upon the lens of the camera. This is realism," he writes; "a method, latterly exalted to an art, a little art which cannot see the wood for the trees. This is the false Naturalism which believed

that art consisted merely in sketching a piece of nature in a natural manner, but it is not the true naturalism which seeks out those points in life, where the great conflicts occur, which loves to see that which cannot be seen every day, rejoices in the battle of elemental powers, whether they be called love or hatred, revolt or sociability; which cares not, whether a subject be beautiful or ugly, if only it is great."

"I do not know the modes," cried Socrates, "but leave me one which will imitate the tones and accents of a brave man, enduring danger or distress, fighting with constancy against fortune." The Naturalism of which Strindberg was a prophet might have chosen these words as a motto. Socrates continued: "And also one fitted for the work of peace, for prayer heard by the gods, for the successful persuasion or exhortation of men, and generally for the sober enjoyment of ease and prosperity." With this side of man's natural life young Naturalism had no sympathy. That came with years of discretion.

The transformation of the diffuse drama in many acts into the concise and dynamic one-act play with few characters, and the simplification of stage technique, were the salient

points in Strindberg's proclamation of Theatre Reform. He held that there is generally but one scene, towards which the playwright mounts on devious paths, and that author and audience alike are made to endure painful side-shows for the sake of one thing worth seeing. A man's dramatic talent may outlast his one-act play, but it is taxed to depletion in the construction of five acts, just as the imaginative patience of the audience is exhausted by the long intervals.

The Greek art of the one-act play had been revived in the eighteenth century in the *Proverbes Dramatiques* of Carmontelle, developed by Musset and Feuillet, and had finally found a modern interpretation in the style of the *Quart d'Heure* of which *Entre Frères* by Guiche and Lavedan is a typical example. When writing *Lady Julie*, Strindberg had in mind the monographic novels of the brothers de Goncourt. The dialogue in *Lady Julie* is interrupted twice. There is singing and a folk-dance. Such diversions do not leave the spectator time to escape from the suggestion of the playwright, or to lose the precious illusion. The performance of *Lady Julie* lasts an hour and a half, and Strindberg saw no reason why the public

should not be educated to endure one act which lasts the whole evening. There may be mental diversions, such as are provided by monologue, pantomime and ballet; but people can listen for hours to sermons and speeches, and may consequently learn true dramatic concentration.

The scenery should be simple. "With the aid of a table and two chairs the strongest conflicts which life offers could be presented," he writes of the *genre* of the *proverbe*, "and by that form of art it became possible to popularise the discoveries of modern psychology." The decorations should only be suggestive of place and time. An impressionistic representation of a corner of a room and its furniture—not the whole room—is all that is needed. Grotesque scene-painting should be abolished together with the stagey villain who can create no illusion of wickedness. Footlights were an abomination to Strindberg. M. Ludovic Céller* tells us of their humble and smoky origin in the tallow candles which, for economical reasons, were placed on the floor to illuminate the darkness of stage and auditorium. Whatever

* "*Les décors, les costumes et la mise-en-scène au XVII siècle.*"

their origin, they have a power of distorting facial expression against which Strindberg vehemently protested. His protest has been echoed by numerous reformers of the theatre. But the footlights remain to disfigure noses and blacken eyes in accordance with time-honoured custom. With proper side-lighting and less paint on the faces of the actors Strindberg saw possibilities for the mimic art, which are hidden under shadows and heavy layers of powder and rouge. The visible orchestra was another obstacle to scenic progress; in the shrinking of stage and auditorium to a size compatible with artistic presentation, he saw another means of improvement. In the small, simplified theatre, with well-regulated light effects and actors with natural intonation and gestures, Strindberg found a chance for the continuance of the theatre. Many of his ideas have been realised in the Künstler Theater of Munich.

In the preface to *Lady Julie* he deals with the all-important subject of characterisation. "As modern characters," he writes, "living in a period of transition more hurried and hysterical than its immediate predecessor, I have drawn my characters vacillating, broken, mixtures of old and new. . . . My souls

(characters) are conglomerations of past and present stages of culture, scraps of books and newspapers, fragments of men and women, torn shreds of Sunday attire that are now rags, such as go to make up a soul. And I have thrown in some history of origins in letting the weaker steal and repeat the words of the stronger, in letting the souls borrow ideas, or so-called suggestions from one another."

He ridicules the ordinary idea of a strong character. The person "who has acquired a fixed temperament or accommodated himself to a certain rôle in life, who in a word has ceased to grow, was supposed to have character; whilst one who developed, the skilful navigator on the stream of life who does not sail with close-tied sheets, but who knows when to fall off before the wind and when to luff again, was deemed deficient in character. . . . This bourgeois conception of the fixity of the soul was transferred to the stage, where all that is bourgeois has ever reigned supreme. Such a character became synonymous with a gentleman, fixed and ready-made, one who invariably appeared drunk, jocular, melancholy. . . . I do not, therefore, believe in simple theatrical char-

acters. And the summary judgments which authors pass on human beings, such as: this one is stupid; that one is brutal; he is jealous; he is mean, etc., should be refuted by naturalists who know the rich complexity of the soul, and who realise that 'vice has an obverse which shows a considerable likeness to virtue.'"

The secret of Strindberg's great influence on the theatre of twenty years ago lay in this very conception of character. His men and women are *alive*, moving, changing, growing, shrinking in ceaseless response to the pressure of existence. He is the dramatist of the *perpetuum mobile* in the modern heart, the interpreter of inexhaustible discontent in himself and others. His personality vibrates in the dialogue, and lifts the idea of the play to the surface in every consecutive scene, but the artist in him is stronger than the idealogue. The curtain and the settled problem do not drop together. Strindberg has answered a question or two, tentatively, in his own manner, but others crowd in upon him and his audience. The absence of finality is felt through the tragic endings, through the strong blend of moods, emotions and desires of his exceptional characters, through the un-

reasonableness of his prejudices. In spite of pessimism and cynicism a hope of change is communicated to the spectator, which penetrates depression and stimulates the curiosity to live.

Amongst the one-act plays which were written between 1887 and 1897, *Samum*, *Pariah*, *The Stronger*, *Playing with Fire* and *The Link* present the typical characters of psychic intensity and neuropathic activity. *Samum* is the story of the revenge of an Arabian girl and her lover upon a hapless Frenchman, lieutenant in a Zouave regiment. She kills him, not with a dagger, for that might involve the punishment of her tribe, but with words. With the help of "Samum," the hot, suffocating wind of the desert which blows phantoms into the white man's brain, she thrusts suggestion after suggestion into his mind. She makes the sick man believe that he has been bitten by a mad dog; she offers him sand instead of water in the drinking bowl, and rejoices when he dreads the drink; she invokes hideous pictures of the defeat of his regiment, the faithlessness of his wife, the death of his child, before his fevered imagination. She finally makes him stare in a mirror at the ghastly image of a skull, and

tells him that this is his face, that he is dead. And when the Frenchman, murdered by horror, sinks back dead, Youssef, her lover, proud of race and proud of the woman's black magic, hails her as the worthy mother of his child.

Pariah is a dialogue which bears the mark of the master-craftsman in the dramatic presentation of psychological events. It is a contest of minds founded on a tale by Ola Hansson. Two middle-aged men, one an archæologist, the other a somewhat mysterious man of unknown occupation, who has returned to Sweden from America, have met in the country. The archæologist is engaged in recovering antique ornaments from the bowels of the earth. In the room where the two men face each other there stands a box, containing bracelets and trinkets of gold which he has found. Herr X., the archæologist, talks of his poverty, of how easily he might appropriate to his own use some of the gold he has found. Debts could be paid, and his wife's anxiety allayed by one single bracelet. So simple and yet impossible to do. Herr Y. listens to the reasons which prevent Herr X. from becoming a thief though there can be no fear of detection.

Incapable of stealing himself, Herr X. expresses his pity for others who fall under similar temptation. He suspects that the man by his side is in need of such pity—his conduct has already betrayed the convict. By a series of psychologically timed questions Herr X. unmasks Herr Y., who, taken by surprise, confesses that he has served a term of imprisonment for fraud. The wild anger which for a moment surged through the brain of the criminal has given way to servile admiration of the superior mind. He kisses the archæologist's hand. All is known, and yet there is no condescension on the part of the stronger man. Herr Y. tells the story of how he came to write a false signature; he wishes to persuade Herr X. of his spiritual innocence, show him that he was the victim of an uncontrollable impulse which never defiled his real self. Herr X. has fallen into an introspective mood. Hesitating, half afraid of what he is doing, he confides to Herr Y. that he has killed a man—a worthless, drunken old servant, and without intention to inflict deadly injury, it is true, but such is the fact: he is a murderer. In reply to Herr Y.'s eager questions why he escaped without punishment, Herr X. gives the reasons, why he believed it to be

a greater wrong to give himself up to justice than to conceal the deed—there were his parents, his career, his fitness for life. Herr Y. has the scoundrel's alert sense of opportunity. He begins by pointing out his moral superiority over Herr X., and ends by trying to extort money. Let Herr X. only put his hand in the box, and transfer some of its contents to Herr Y., and nothing more will be said of the crime. Let him refuse to do this, and the whole story will be told at the nearest police-station. The end of this incisive piece of psychology shows us Herr Y., driven to flight by the cold-blooded logic of Herr X., who demonstrates that the would-be accuser is a forger who is "wanted," and whose dread of the police authorities is a guarantee of his discretion in the matter.

The Stronger is a contest of temperaments carried out by one voice only. Two women—the wife and the mistress of one man—have met in a café. Mademoiselle Y. sits silent, whilst Madame X. talks. But her silence conveys more than speech. It drives Madame X. to reveal the humiliation she has suffered, it drives her through jealous and angry recriminations to a triumphant and

vindictive assertion of her superior position as the legal wife and mother. As an ironical and adroit study of two types of the soul feminine, and by the skilful handling of the monologue the piece is one of the best of its genre.

Playing with Fire is a triangular comedy of marriage, in which conjugal fidelity is saved at the eleventh hour through sudden and truly Strindbergian disillusionment which makes the friend of husband and wife depart like a rocket from the house of temptation, whilst the peace of an orderly lunch descends upon the family. *The First Warning* is a conjugal squabble, and one of the weakest dramatic episodes conceived by Strindberg. The character of the jealous and enslaved husband, who has made six vain attempts to flee from the devastating charm of his wife, is a diluted *réchauffé* of an incident related in *The Confession of a Fool,* including the significant moment when the wife is subjugated by the shock of losing her first front tooth, and the attendant discovery of the vanity of all things of beauty. The dialogue is unreal, and Strindberg's sketch of the young girl so unnatural that we may be grateful that the type has not been more frequently chosen for " naturalistic " treatment.

The Link, a tragedy published in 1897, is a masterly divorce-court scene. Here Strindberg draws the shame and agony of the broken marriage-tie with bitter realism, and yet with a delicate touch of that all-human compassion before which the flowers of satire wither. The Baron and the Baroness have decided to separate, and proceedings for a deed of separation have been entered by the husband. There is a link between them which cannot be broken—the child whom they both love; and for his sake they are determined not to expose their differences before the hungry eyes of scandal-mongers. The husband is willing to let the mother have the custody of the child. But the questions of the judge pierce the veneer of amiability. Who is the cause of dissension? What has brought them before the Court? The answers bring accusations and recriminations, a parade of quarrels and dissensions, angry revelations of infidelity, disgust, espionage, lies, hatred, and, when the Court exercises its legal power of depriving both parents of the custody of the child, the torture of vain regret and empty lives. There is consummate art in the picture of the emotional revolution, through which husband and wife are forced into self-damning revela-

Photo by Andersson, Stockholm

1904

AUGUST STRINDBERG

Photo by Hamnqvist, Stockholm

1906

tions. The minor characters of the jurymen and court officials are drawn with a calm observation and quiet humour which form an effective background to its central tragic figures. Incidentally, the inadequacy of the law to secure justice for the wronged is shown, and the lawyer in the play has some affinity with the legal luminaries in M. Brieux's *La Robe Rouge*. But Strindberg's judge is a righteous man who chafes under the limitations and responsibilities of his profession.

Those, whose knowledge of Strindberg's writings is limited to his naturalistic plays, have judged his powers as a literary artist from an entirely inadequate point of view. When Justin McCarthy spoke of the real Strindberg, as revealed in *The Father*, *Lady Julie* and *Comrades*, he ignored, not only the volumes of essays, stories and novels which preceded the plays mentioned, but those which were published at the same time. Strindberg has been described as a man who had no interest to spare for social problems, or politics, or the great movements of his time—as a dramatist whose knife was forever delving in the pathological tissue of passions, and whose eyes saw nothing but the broad and sombre outlines of inevitable tragedy.

Those who know *The People of Hemsö* (1887), a novel of the fishermen's life in the Stockholm Archipelago, fresh as the salt breeze of the sea, bright with sunshine, and the jollity of a man with steady nerves, who is thoroughly at home in a boat and in a hut, are familiar with another side of Strindberg. Or the volume of short stories entitled *Fisher Folk* (1888), with its sketches of life on the island, broadly humorous, impressive in its unaffected narrative of the struggles and ambitions of the hardy toilers among the rocks. The stories bring us in the midst of the island folk: we know their practical, wind-dried minds where superstition lurks in a corner; we see their sparse bodies—sometimes fed on herring-heads and potatoes. We attend the dance which the poor, hunch-backed tailor gives to the young people as an offering on the altar of joy, and lament with him the devastation wrought by terpsichorean orgies in his garden. We accompany Westman, the ungodly pilot who has harpooned a seal from his little boat, and is dragged out to sea by the cruel monster in spite of pitiful recitals of the Lord's Prayer, and offers of a pure silver chandelier to the local church. We are made to participate in

the people's life. In both books there is a wealth of descriptive power, and there is something fundamentally healthy in the figures of the common people whom he draws, a natural pathos in their vulgarity, and even in their criminality.

There are some who see exclusively *das Dämonische* in Strindberg, and who picture him as perpetually skirting precipices of moral and intellectual negation, or as a Lucifer who never emerges from consuming tongues of fire. They have nothing to say of such books as his *Sketches of Flowers and Animals* (1888). Here we meet him, a mild and patient gardener, sowing his salad and spinach, revelling in the reward which his cool cucumbers offer after having been carefully tended by loving hands. Here he initiates us into his cult of the flower, his adoration of colour and form in the plant world; he anticipates Maeterlinck in his sensitive studies of the intelligence of flowers and the mysteries of seeds. His *Fables* are stories of birds, insects and bushes, betraying an intimate knowledge of nature, and sparkling with a good-humoured satire. In these books there are strokes of brilliant imagination, there is a womanly tenderness for the lives of plant-children. In

one of his stories* he tells us of a tall fir that can feel and suffer, and his description of the spirit within the tree which sobs under the wood-cutter's axe, and which some day we shall recognise, reminds us of Fiona Macleod's *Cathal of the Woods*. Strindberg's love of Nature had many qualities in common with Thoreau—there is the same pleasure in cultivating the cabbage-patch, the same ecstatic contemplation of green life. Thoreau could find his way in the wood during the night by the touch of his feet. Strindberg, treading his way through the forest in the dark hours, knows whether he walks on soil, clubmoss or maidenhair, "through the nerves of his large toe."†

There is also a practical, homely side of Strindberg, which is generally ignored, qualities appertaining to the small farmer with a keen eye to profitable cultivation of the land. Without these qualities he could not have written *Among French Peasants* (1889), which is a series of articles on the life and conditions in agricultural France. They are the product of the mind of a true son of the soil, equipped with a journalist's power of rapid general-

* *Confused Sensations.*
† *The Confession of a Fool.*

isation. Strindberg travelled through France, notebook in hand, stayed amongst the peasants, measured hay and corn, attended weddings and fairs, annotating the prices of meat and butter, studied the ravages of the phylloxera and geological formations. The book is crammed with facts and comparative statistics of town and country, wheat and wine, village education, libraries, labourers' wages, cheese-making, the best fertilisers, and other matters of import to rural economy.

He shirked no trouble, avoided no obstacles to equip himself as a writer on gigantic subjects. His encyclopædic grasp of a many-sided subject is shown in this book, and in his numerous essays on sociological questions. It carries with it a certain superficiality, and readiness to theorise from insufficient data which may necessitate a graceful retraction of opinions, once loudly proclaimed. But there is ample compensation in the freshness and vigour of a mind which bears crop after crop without exhausting itself. Such a quickly grown crop, verdant and luxurious in ideas, is the essay, written in 1884, *On the General Discontent, its Causes and Remedies*, in which he inveighs against the evils of a false Culture, and within the space of a hundred pages

lets Society pass in review before his critical pen in the types of the king, the bureaucrat, the physician, the teacher, the merchant, the sailor, the artisan, the manufacturer, the labourer, the servant, the scientist, the author, the journalist, and the artist, and finally prescribes the pills of self-help, self-government and limitation of useless luxuries, artfully mixed. There is much of Rousseau, Tolstoy, Spencer, Mill and de Quesnay in the social philosophy, with which he wished to build on the ruins, wrought by *The Red Room* and *The New Kingdom*. The ideal peasant—in Tolstoyan garb—was then Strindberg's hope for humanity.

When he wrote *At the Edge of the Sea*, in 1890, the horrors of unchecked democracy had been revealed to him. It is the story of a highly intelligent, refined and super-sensitive man who is forced to live amongst coarse and ignorant people, and who is gradually driven to insanity and suicide. This book is the apex of Strindberg's novelistic art. The scene is again laid on one of the islands outside Stockholm, the life of the fisherfolk is once more described. But the tone and the colour are changed. There is the same brilliancy in the description of scenery, and the psycho-

logical imagination is more lavish than ever, but the mists of Nietzscheanism lie heavily over the book. The distinction between "slave-morality" and "master-morality" is emphasised with truly Dionysian pessimism.

The same influence coloured the preface to *Lady Julie*, and the novel *Tschandala*, published in 1889, and led Mr. Edmund Gosse into the error of describing Strindberg as "the most remarkable creative talent started by the philosophy of Nietzsche." Strindberg was certainly not "started" by Nietzsche who was entirely unknown to him until the autumn of 1888, when George Brandes brought the two writers together. A correspondence between Nietzsche and Strindberg began in 1889, and continued until Nietzsche's illness. Nietzsche read Strindberg's novels with interest, and Strindberg duly acknowledged the influence which Nietzsche exercised upon him, but protested against the mistaken view expressed by Mr. Gosse and others, in the following words: "Those who have followed my career as a writer at its different stages of development know sufficiently well how early I adopted the so-called Nietzschean standpoint

with regard to conventional morals, and the emancipation of women to give me my due, and Nietzsche his with clear consciences."

The statement that Strindberg was a Nietzschean *pur et simple* is as absurd as the statement that he was a Darwinist or a Methodist. He passed through the fatalism of Hartmann, the pessimism of Schopenhauer, the naturalism of Zola, the realism of Turgenev and Dostoevsky. On one occasion he speaks of Balzac as his master, on another he calls himself a Voltairean. These influences are but lights on the way. He passes on, and speaks to us with a new tongue. When charged with inconsistency he might well have answered with Walt Whitman: "I am large—I contain multitudes."

CHAPTER VII

SELF-TORMENTOR AND VISIONARY

THE restlessness of Genius is a sore trial to Mediocrity. Mediocrity in the Critic's chair, whose business it is to pass judgment upon the artist and his work, to affix a label to his back, and to place him on a particular shelf where the public can find him. The literary artist is expected to have a point of view which he has reached through certain early influences, to express himself in a certain form, and, when mature, to be measurable and easily recognisable in size and colour. If his personality and his writings make the critic's work easy he will be blessed by his contemporaries, or possibly condemned. But he will always be understood, and in the understanding there is solid comfort. You may sneer at the gods of society, you may shake your fist at law and authority, you may ridicule humanity, but you must, like Mr. George

Bernard Shaw, always say the same thing. Voltaire is always expected to contemplate the world with a truly Voltairean smile of irony, Rousseau to cling innocently to Nature, Swift to see humanity only from the satirist's vantage-point.

The man of genius who, conscious of the limitations of a single point of view, seeks another, who strides across the hilltops of past thought in rapid search of a higher one, who hugs philosophies and drops them, holds faiths and deserts them, is a phenomenon before which the critic feels uneasy. He calls in the doctor, and together they prepare the last label of madness—red, like a warning against poison—and hurl it at the extraordinary man when he happens to pass at a convenient distance. Believing that there is nothing further to be said, they return to their respective vocations.

From the points of view of Mediocrity and Eugenics Strindberg presented the typical signs of degeneration, irrespectively of the traits and characteristics which are inadequately defined as the insanity of genius. He was a truth-seeker, and, consequently, a fault-finder. He knew peace and comfort like other men, and brief hours of sunshine,

but spiritual discontent compelled him to be a nomad, a wanderer in many lands. Hence the critic's failure to classify him as a romanticist or realist, a socialist or individualist, a pessimist or humorist, a maniac or mystic, or to map out his life into periods and squares of thought. There was something of the eternal recurrence in him, an alchemical consciousness of all in all. He leaves beliefs, parts with influences, conquers new lands through violent crises of awakening which well-nigh wreck the body, and returns to the first camp, richer and yet the same. Through soul-sickness and hallucinations, through delirium and phrenopathic punishments he is led to the super-sanity of genius. He becomes the visionary of things hidden, the medium of spirits, the sinner on the road to Damascus, the prophet of divine justice.

Mistakes and bitter experiences prepared the way for the religious crisis of 1894. In 1887 he left Switzerland and France for Bavaria, where he wrote *The Father* and *The People of Hemsö*. He lived in Denmark from the autumn of 1887 to the summer of 1889. The prosecution of *Married* had inspired cautiousness in the hearts of Swedish pub-

lishers, and Strindberg had only with difficulty found a publisher for *The Father* and *Lady Julie*. The plays were promptly attacked by Swedish critics, amongst them Professor Warburg, author of a history of literature, who thought their naturalism an unmistakable form of decadence. When Strindberg returned to his country in 1889 the hostility aroused by *Married*, and augmented by lively tales of the author's views on morality took an unexpectedly practical form. When yachting along the west coast for the purpose of collecting material for a great work on *The Scenery of Sweden*, he was actually refused permission to land in one of the fishing villages.* During the two years which he now spent in Sweden he became embittered by the enmity of his critics. He isolated himself on one of his beloved islands outside Stockholm, wrote and painted. In the autumn of 1892 an exhibition of his pictures was held in Stockholm. It was impressions of the sea which his brush had chosen—ice, mist, storm—and painted, not only with a tender feeling for island scenery, but disclosing considerable technical merit and accuracy of hand.

* *Boken om Strindberg* af Gustaf Uddgren.

The principal cause of suffering lay in Strindberg's eroticism, his interminable suspiciousness against his wife which made his divorce in 1892 a merciful end to a marriage of torment. There is much in the repulsive pages of *The Confession of a Fool* which betrays its author's lack of mental balance; the incessant puling over the woman's wickedness, and the attendant self-appreciation are not apt to command the reader's sympathy. The same may be said of the second volume of *Married*, published in 1886. There are a carelessness of style, and a bluntness of accusation against womankind which make the book inartistic. The *ad captandum* controversialist has overruled judgment; there is a tone of personal irritation in the stories which Strindberg tells us were written "in self-defence" against the attacks, made upon him by feminists. Like John Knox, when he wrote *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regimen of Women*, Strindberg was actuated by a kind of religious fervour. Like John Knox he detested "this monstriferous empire of women," whilst his admiration for the dangerous sex repeatedly cast him in chains of bondage. Like Schopenhauer he mocked

all womankind "long of hair and short of sense," and threw misogyny to the winds before the first pair of charming eyes or dainty feet.

In the autumn of 1892 we find Strindberg in Germany. The curse of marriage is no longer upon his head. He lives at Friedrichshagen, near Berlin, with his friends, the Swedish writer Ola Hansson, and his wife Laura Marholm who has written an interesting psychological study of Strindberg. Strindberg has passed through one of those "deaths," in which he found temporary Nirvana when the battle of thoughts had been too sanguinary. He has forsaken literature, thrown away the pen as a worthless tool of a tormented imagination which can scratch but not solve the riddle of the Sphinx. He has been re-born—a scientist. The exact sciences—chemistry, physics, astronomy—hold out hopes of complete replies to questions which the playwright can dress in human shape but not analyse.

Strindberg's friend, Gustaf Uddgren,* has described a visit to him at this time. His study was bare and uninviting. On the floor there lay stacks of scientific books piled up

* *En Ny Bok om Strindberg.*

against the wall. They had been bought with the first money he had earned in Germany, and none had been wasted on the luxury of a bookcase. The room contained a large, old easel, not unlike a brown skeleton; a writing-table from which the usual heaps of manuscript and notes were conspicuously absent; and, for the comfort of the body, a few easy chairs and a sofa, arranged so as to give the impression of a drawing-room. Strindberg did not wish to discuss literary subjects. He was glad to have left off writing, and looked forward with eager joy to scientific research. Uddgren tried in vain to induce him to talk about Walt Whitman. Strindberg preferred to discuss Red Indians with his guest who knew something of the wild west.

After a few months at Friedrichshagen Strindberg moved to Berlin. He was in need of change and expansion. In the evenings he was now found in a little Wein Stube in Unter den Linden which is called "Zum Schwarzen Ferkel." It had already won fame as the favourite resort of Heine and E. T. A. Hoffmann. Here he was the centre of a literary and scientific coterie. Guitar in hand, amidst sympathetic friends, he became Dionysos, the singer of glad tidings,

of wine-born joy. He improvised songs, and the nights were made short with wit and sparkling discussions. The Polish writer, Stanislav Przybyszewski, became much attached to Strindberg who found in him whirling depths of imaginative thought which attracted him, and made him seek his society on the principle of *similia similibus curantur*. Amongst other friends of the coterie were Holger Drachmann, Gunnar Heiberg, Adolf Paul, and Edvard Munch. "Zum Schwarzen Ferkel" is impregnated with the Strindbergian spirit. The landlord proudly shows the visitor the portraits which Strindberg gave him, and the picture by Strindberg, entitled *Die Welle*, which hangs on the wall.

The plunge into the "exact" physical sciences, from which he had expected so much, proved disappointing. The boundaries of experimental research were soon reached by his penetrative imagination. He had a passion for facts, but he could not, like the typical man of science, content himself with systematised classification of things observable. His speculative writings are studded with allusions to scientific theories, and show an extensive knowledge of the history of chemistry and botany, of the

facts of astronomy, geology, and zoology. He garnered the fruits of nineteenth-century science with the pleasure of the true dilettante, and having tasted them, declared them insipid. The imaginative processes of his mind continued where those of others stop ; he passed from the visible to the occult, from rigid induction to extravagant fancy. Beyond the uttermost limits of science he came to see another world, in which chemistry became alchemy, astronomy astrology, physics the servant of magic, and the form of man the tool of mighty forces. He became a student of magnetism, hypnotism, telepathy, spiritism, of the secret knowledge which has persisted throughout the ages as the pearl within the oyster.

Whilst literary Berlin was acclaiming Strindberg as the naturalistic playwright, his mind was centred on the hyperchemical speculations which later on found expression in his *Antibarbarus I or the Psychology of Sulphur or All is in All*, and in *Sylva Sylvarum*. Whilst wings of imagination were lifting him to new planes of thought, there was a sudden jerk on the chain which bound him to earth. He fell in love. The ideal woman had again appeared, now in the person of Fräulein

Frida Uhl, a young Austrian girl, daughter of Hofrath Friedrich Uhl, in Vienna. They became engaged, and art-loving Berlin was one day surprised to see Strindberg escorting his fiancée to the National Gallery. He was attired in the fashionable apparel of the Berlin dandy. A check suit of a large pattern, a short yellow overcoat, a garish tie, a grotesque walking-stick, and an immaculate silk hat which, according to the account given by Gustaf Uddgren, retained its place with difficulty on the leonine mane, gave him an appearance of unwonted worldliness. They were married in April, 1893, and spent the honeymoon at Gravesend. An injunction had meanwhile been granted against the German edition of *The Confession of a Fool*, and Strindberg returned to Berlin in order to appear before the Court in the action which followed. The prosecution failed. Strindberg and his wife spent the winter at her father's country place at Armstädten, on the Danube, where he returned to his esoteric studies, and wrote his *Antibarbarus*. In August, 1894, Strindberg went to Paris. His wife had accompanied him, and left their child in Austria. The tie was now irksome to him; *les hautes études* and not woman had again become the

mistress of his soul. In November he sent his wife back to her parents.

"It was with a feeling of wild joy," he writes, "that I returned from Gare du Nord, where I had left my dear little wife who was going to our child who had fallen ill in a distant country. The sacrifice of my heart was thus made complete." Their last words, "When do we meet again?—Soon," were deceptive; an intuition truly told him that they had parted for ever. He had placed human affection on the altar of truth-seeking, thus practising the motto with which *Inferno* opens:

> Courbe la tête, fier Sicambre!
> Adore ce que tu as brûlé,
> Brûle ce que tu as adoré!

At the Café de la Régence he sat down at the table where he used to sit with his wife, "the beautiful wardress of my prison who spied on my soul day and night, guessed my secret thoughts, watched the course of my ideas, jealously observed my spirit's striving towards the unknown." He felt free, a sense of mental expansion, of liberated power, a call to reach the arcanum of human knowledge.

In Paris he was now the playwright of

the day. The success of *Lady Julie* and *Creditors* was followed by a brilliant performance of *The Father* at Théâtre de l'Œuvre in December. All Paris talked of his originality and of his misogyny which provided a piquant sensation, and a subject for interesting gossip in literary and dramatic circles. He was interviewed and photographed—he was the *cher maître* of the theatrical manager who expected from him a sensible appreciation of his possibilities for further triumphs on the stage. In Berlin he was the literary lion of the moment. His plays and novels lay in the booksellers' windows in attractive German dress, his portrait was exhibited, his personality was discussed. He was saluted as a leader of a new movement. But he turned his back on all this. Another self was shed; a voice within whispered the old burning "Beyond this"—drove him across the borderland of sanity, and into the chaos of unhuman desires.

He left the café, and returned to his rooms in Quartier Latin. From their hiding-place in his trunk he took six crucibles made of fine porcelain, bought with money which he "had stolen from himself," made up a fierce fire in the stove, and pulled down the blinds

for the night's experiment. His theory regarding the composition of sulphur which had met with such merciless ridicule was now to be put to the final test. A packet of pure sulphur and a pair of tongs completed the equipment of the laboratory. The sulphur burnt with infernal flames, and towards the morning he was able to demonstrate that it contained carbon. He believed that he had solved the great problem, overthrown orthodox chemistry, and gained scientific immortality. He had not noticed that the intense heat had burnt his hands, and caused the skin to fall off in flakes, but the pain of undressing in the morning made him conscious of the injury. The joy in the pursuit of the problems which haunted him was, however, greater than the pain, and the experiments were continued night after night. He had proved the existence of carbon in sulphur, now he had to show that it contained hydrogen and oxygen. The burns on his hands became filled with fragments of coke, they were bleeding, and caused him great pain, but he persisted in the work. He avoided his friends, and sought absolute loneliness. Meanwhile he wrote love-letters to his wife, relating to her the wonderful

discoveries which he had made. She replied by warnings against such futile and foolish occupations, in which she saw nothing but waste of money. Irritated by her want of sympathy, Strindberg sent her a letter of farewell to wife and child, in which he led her to understand that a love affair had absorbed all his thoughts. She replied by instituting proceedings for divorce.

The charge which he had made against himself was not true, and he was soon the prey of remorse. His injured pride had led him to write a letter which he describes as shameful and unpardonable, and in the loneliness which followed he saw himself as a suicide and assassinator. On Christmas Eve the vision of his deserted wife and child by the Christmas tree caused him to flee from the company which he had sought, and visit café after café, where he failed to find comfort in the usual glass of absinthe. During the night the feeling of being persecuted by an unknown power, bent on preventing his great task, overcame him. He slept badly, and was repeatedly awakened by a cold current of air sweeping across his face. Poverty, his persistent enemy, did not leave him in peace. He lacked the necessary means

to pay for rent and regular meals. His hands were black and swollen through neglect, and symptoms of blood-poisoning in the arms set in. The news of his helplessness and misery spread amongst his countrymen in Paris. He was sought out by a persistent countrywoman who raised a sum of money amongst the Swedes in Paris, and Strindberg was brought to the Hospital of Saint Louis, his cup of humiliation filled to overflowing.

At the hospital he felt imprisoned amongst ghosts, punished by having to live in the midst of people with the faces of the dead and dying, the wrecks of humanity who offended his sense of beauty by appearing without a nose or an eye, with a split lip or a mortifying cheek. Amongst these derelicts Strindberg watched the gentle ministrations of the old sœur de charité. She was kind to him, allowed him little privileges, called him her boy, and he responded by calling her "my mother." "How blissful," he writes, "to say this word mother which had not passed my lips for thirty years. The old woman who belongs to the Order of Saint Augustine, and who wears the costume of the dead because she has never taken part in life, is gentle as self-sacrifice, and teaches us to smile at our

pains, as if they were pleasures, for she knows how beneficial suffering can be. Not a reproachful word, no expostulations or sermons." "This nun has played a part in my life," he adds, and, when writing down his *Inferno* experiences three years later, he sends her thoughts of gratitude for having shown him the path of the cross.

During the months which he spent in the hospital his chemical speculations continued to absorb his interest. He submitted his insufficiently burnt sulphur to an independent analysis which confirmed his demonstration that it contained carbon. The chemist at the hospital encouraged his researches, and Strindberg laid the results before the public in an article which appeared in *Le Temps*, and brought him requests for further articles on his theories. He left the hospital in February, and spent two months in chemical work during which he became a student at the Sorbonne, and used the analytical laboratory. At the conclusion of his experiments he was satisfied that sulphur is a ternary combination consisting of carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen.

A superstitious faith in signs and warnings had meanwhile developed. A mysterious

meaning in the names of the streets and places which he passed made itself known to him—rue Beaurepaire, rue Dieu, Porte Saint-Martin—a gorgeous signboard above a dyeing business, displaying his own initials on a white silver cloud surmounted by a rainbow, became a good omen of the future. The chemist Orfila revealed himself as a kind patron saint to whom he was strangely led, first by finding his chemical treatise in a bookseller's shop, then by discovering his grave in the course of a morning walk in the Montparnasse cemetery, and finally by being attracted to Hotel Orfila—the monasterial guest-house from which women were excluded.

In his daily experiences he discerned the guidance and punishment of an unseen hand which, for a high and inscrutable purpose, was leading him out of his past folly. Sometimes the Unknown One delivered him into the hands of demons; at other times he received the grace which saved him from temptations and evil. The idea of persecution permitted for the sake of the chastisement needed by his spirit became paramount. The simultaneous playing of three pianos in the rooms adjoining his, the unexpected presentation

of the hotel bill, an inexplicable noise in the room, during which the plaster of the ceiling fell on his head, roused his suspicions. He moved to Hotel Orfila which looked like a monastery. It harboured Roman Catholic students, and an atmosphere of mysticism.

Annoyances, revelations, and delusions of persecution now crowded in upon him. Strange dreams foretold the future, commonplace objects assumed fantastic shape. One day, when looking at the embryo of a sprouting walnut under the microscope, he saw two little white hands folded as if in prayer. Immovable, perfect in form, they were there, the hands of a child or a woman, raised beseechingly towards him. Shortly before the incident he had sinned grievously against his child. Seized by an uncontrollable longing to be reunited to his wife, in spite of the divorce proceedings, he had wished—with a concentrated and occultly sharpened desire —that the child might fall ill, and thus become a link of reunion. There were other mysteries. The coal in his stove burned itself into grotesque shapes, works of some kind of elemental sculptor, which were so realistic that the sparrows, feeding on crumbs by his window, were frightened by

the sight of them. His pillow-case, crumpled by the after-dinner nap, showed him one day a head in marble modelled on the lines of Michel-Angelo; another day a mighty Zeus rested on his bed; one night, after a festive evening with friends, he was received by the devil himself in correct middle-age attire, thus competing with Blake who one day, whilst ascending the stairs of his house, saw Satan glaring at him through a window.

From sulphur he turned to iodine as a subject of original experimentation, and then, oblivious of Aristotle's injunctions, to the goldmaker's art. He did not possess "the most precious stone of the philosophers," by which base metals are changed into gold, and he had to be unorthodox—even when practising the alchemistic art. He therefore rejected the alchemical faith that gold alone is free from sulphur, and commenced experiments with solutions of sulphate of iron in support of the theory that gold contains iron and sulphur. He succeeded in making gold—his special gold of art—but it vanished when put to the ordinary chemical test. Signs and guidance from unseen Powers encouraged him to persist in spite of failure. Whilst out for a walk his eyes were riveted

by the letters F and S intertwined. At first he thought of his wife's initials, and of her faithful love, but such a commonplace interpretation was quickly dismissed. The letters meant *Fer* and *Soufre*—the secret of the generation of gold was thus laid bare before his eyes. Another time two pieces of paper lying at the foot of a monument attracted his attention. One bore the imprint 207, the other 28. What could this be but a reminder of the atomic weights of lead (207) and silicum (28)? Subsequent experiments in which he extracted gold from lead and silicum confirmed the wisdom of the exegesis made. But the spirit of gold is fickle. One day, after repeated failures, when standing naked to the waist as a smith before the fiercely burning furnace, he looked into the crucible, and saw a skull with a pair of glittering eyes. The eyes looked into his soul with a supernatural irony, and the goldmaker was struck by paralysing doubt, by fear of the consequences of his folly.

One day he was forcibly reminded that the fruits of his labour should be consecrated to Wisdom, not Mammon. He had written an article in *Le Temps*, and drawn public

interest to his theory that iodine could be made from benzine. An enterprising agent called on him, and showed him that his idea contained possibilities for a highly successful commercial undertaking, and that a patent might be worth millions of francs. Strindberg repudiated the suggestion, though the agent offered him 100,000 francs if he would go with him to Berlin, and subordinate his experiments to industrial usages. Unpaid bills and the usual want of money caused him to give more serious thought to the offer made. After some time he was willing to meet the agent and a chemist, for the purpose of making a conclusive experiment, and to turn his art into much-needed cash. He collected his retorts and reagents, and arrived at the agent's office on the day appointed. It happened to be Whit-Sunday, and the office, which looked out on a dark and grimy street, was so dirty that the result was one of those mental revolutions to which hyper-aesthetic senses are subject. " Memories of childhood were awakened," he writes. " Whitsuntide, the feast of joy, when the little church was decorated with foliage, tulips, and lilies, when it was opened for the children's first Communion, the girls clad in white like

angels . . . the organ . . . the tolling of the bells . . ."

A feeling of shame overcame him, he returned home determined not to turn science into a business. He cleared his room of the chemical apparatus, swept and dusted it, and made it beautiful with flowers. A bath and clean clothes added to the feeling of purification, and during a walk in the Montparnasse cemetery gentle thoughts of peace filled his mind. *O crux ave spes unica*—these words from the graves carried a message of the future. Not love, not gain, not honour for him, but the cross, the only path to wisdom!

This unfitness for practical life, this sudden change of personality, through which the poet or the child within are confronted with unbearable conditions, brings a smile to the lips of the man who is thoroughly "fit." The man of the world does not only keep religion and business in water-tight compartments, he keeps dreams for the night, and poetical recollections for important occasions, such as weddings and funerals. He is not troubled by unexpected visitants from his subconscious self which cause inconsistencies and poetic delirium. He may well deplore

the unpracticality of men like Renan who dreamily allow themselves to be exploited by "sharper" brains, whilst they spend years in contemplation of their own complexity. "I am a tissue of contradictions," wrote Renan, ". . . one of my halves is constantly occupied in demolishing the other, like the fabulous animal of Ctesias who ate his paws without knowing it."*

Instead of selling his process of manufacturing iodine, Strindberg returned to the hyperchemical task which he had set himself : to eliminate the barriers between matter, and that which is called spirit. An object worthy indeed of concentrated effort, worthy even in the face of the inevitable failure of seeking to grasp that which to human intelligence is unknowable !

Meanwhile he went "mad." Mad as Tasso and Cellini, Poe and Blake. We cannot dispute the madness, but we may hold that the madness of genius is more valuable to humanity than the sanity of mediocrity.

In Strindberg we can clearly distinguish between cerebral derangements causing auditory hallucinations as well as delusions of persecution, and the super-conscious

* *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse.*

activity which produced the state of *clair-psychism*, which is generally classed with insanity. Dr. W. Hirsch has studied Strindberg's disease from the ordinary alienist's point of view, and concluded that he suffered from *paranoia simplex chronica*—a diagnosis which is empty of meaning when applied to such a mind. Dr. S. Rahmer * made Strindberg the subject of a more comprehensive psychopathic study, and defined his case as one of *melancholia daemomaniaca*. The inadequacy of such diagnoses will be apparent to every serious student of *Inferno* and *Legends*—the books which are mostly extracts from the diary in which he recorded his madness—and of plays like *To Damascus*, *Advent*, *Easter*, *The Dream Play*, and *The Great Highway*, which give evidence of his lucidity, and of the mysticism which he distilled from mental torture.

There is nothing original in the fact that a man describes his own madness in prose or verse. Such descriptions may even be regarded as a distinct genre of literary activity, perverse and detestable to those who, like Mr. Balfour, want only the "cheerful" note in literature, but of

* *Grenzfragen der Literatur und Medizin*, Munich, 1907.

Photo by A. Malmstrom, Stockholm

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infinite interest to those who place a truthful account of the human soul above one which is pleasing. Nathaniel Lee's poems, Lenan's *Traumgewalten*, Hoffmann's *Kreisler* possess a psychological interest which no clamour for literary cradle-songs can remove. Strindberg's self-revelations have a touch of that exultation which, through a dominant curiosity, survives the most complete cheerlessness, horror, and pain—that joy of which Charles Lamb wrote to Coleridge: "Dream not, Coleridge, of having tasted all the grandeur and wildness of fancy till you have gone mad," and which made him look back upon his lunacy "with a gloomy kind of envy."

Comparisons between Rousseau's *Confessions*, *Dialogues*, and *Rêveries*, and Strindberg's *Inferno* readily suggest themselves. Both writers reveal, by their minute analysis of sick thoughts, the consciousness of a lunacy which is a necessary experience on the road to spiritual health, and, therefore, shameless. There is much similarity in the stories of persistent attacks by invisible enemies, of plots, and persecutions, in the egocentric deductions from natural phenomena and the events of the world. But

there is also a great difference. Rousseau manages to keep a watchful eye on the preservation of friendly relations with the world throughout his aberrations, whilst Strindberg recklessly defies its judgment.

Strindberg's persecutional mania developed rapidly during the spring and summer of 1896. Every object, every incident was charged with a sinister meaning. He became obsessed with the idea that his former friend, Przybyszewski, whom he writes of as Popoffsky, intended to murder him. The reason for this suspicion lay in Strindberg's former intimacy with the woman who afterwards became Przybyszewski's wife. One day his ear caught the strains of Schumann's *Aufschwung*, played by an unseen musician in an adjoining house. He became strangely agitated. The pianist who played *Aufschwung* in such a manner could only be Przybyszewski, and the music must be a prelude to the revenge which he was about to inflict on Strindberg. With the horror of his impending fate mingled remorse and self-accusation. "My friend, the Russian," he writes, "my disciple who called me father because he had learnt everything from me, my *famulus* who looked upon me as master,

and kissed my hands because his life began where mine ended. It is he who has come from Vienna to Paris in order to kill me . . ." The reflection that he had not borne the Pole's efforts to injure him meekly, but retaliated, at first invested the thought of death with a sacrificial grandeur. But when *Aufschwung* was played every day between four and five fear of death increased. He felt a fierce hatred of the man who thus hunted him down. He sought confirmation of his suspicions by questioning the coterie of artists which met at Mme. Charlotte's *crêmerie* in rue de la Grande Chaumière. The answers seemed to him evasive, and Strindberg withdrew from the circle of friends, convinced that there was a widespread plot against him. The Norwegian artist, Edvard Munch, was at this time painting Strindberg's portrait, and was alternately trusted by him, and suspected as an accomplice in the crime contemplated.

His inflammable fancy saw warnings of danger everywhere. A large dane, lying outside Munch's house, was a sign that he must not enter it, and he returned, thanking the powers which had protected him. Another time he turned away from the house after

seeing a child sitting outside the door with a card in its hand which happened to be a ten of spades. In the Luxembourg Gardens two dry twigs, broken by the storm, lay in such a manner as to form the Greek letters P and Y—the first and the last letters of the dreaded name. He implored the help of Providence, and recited the Psalms of David against his enemies.

The terror of being delivered into the hands of his persecutors was temporarily dispelled by a sense of divine protection, of nearness to the Lord. On March 29th Balzac's *Seraphita* had fallen into his hands, by chance apparently, but really, he thought, through heavenly guidance. The day was the anniversary of Swedenborg's death, and the coincidence became a token of a spiritual bond between him and the great Swedish seer which outlasted his disease, and remained a source of illumination until his death sixteen years later. Orfila and Swedenborg now spoke to him in his hours of hope; he conversed with them as Blake conversed with Dante, Virgil, and Moses. The Old Testament shed strength upon him. He found comfort in the Book of Job, for Satan had obtained leave to tempt him,

as Job was tempted. There were moments when he felt drawn away from life by a heavenly nostalgia, sustained by a realisation of spiritual worth which, at other times, increased his sense of guilt by adding the sin of pride to the many others for which he atoned. Of such moments he writes: "I despise the earth, this impure and unworthy world, humanity and the works of humanity. I see in myself the righteous man to whom the Almighty has sent trials, and whom the purgatory of earthly life shall make worthy of approaching deliverance."

His customary chair at the Brasserie des Lilas was engaged one evening, when he came to seek oblivion in the glass of green absinthe. On another occasion the glass was mysteriously upset, and on a third a chimney above him caught fire, and sent two large pieces of soot into his glass. In these and similar incidents he recognised a guiding hand, tribulations arranged for the purpose of breaking him of a dangerous habit. One is reminded of Rousseau's belief that unfavourable winds had been prepared, as a special trial, for his journey.

Short intervals of spiritual calm did not

allay Strindberg's fear of Przybyszewski. Though substantially unfounded, and, though he was in possession of incontrovertible evidence that the Pole was not in Paris, the fear increased until he was mastered by terror. Hotel Orfila was no longer a retreat of peace. Women were admitted—a circumstance which in itself was calculated to disturb his nerves—and with them followed a host of troubles. A mysterious stranger had taken the room adjoining his, and seemed to imitate all Strindberg's movements. Strindberg sat writing at his table, so apparently did the stranger. When Strindberg rose and pushed back his chair, the stranger did likewise. When Strindberg went to bed, the stranger also went to bed. The unseen enemy was there close to him, watching every movement, waiting for an opportunity to slay him by infernally subtle means. Outside the hotel there were signs of danger. One day he felt Quai Voltaire and Place des Tuileries shake under his feet. Another day a sudden feeling of lameness proved to him that he was being poisoned, and that the Pole had contrived to send gas through the wall. He thought of giving information to the police, but the possi-

bility that he might be imprisoned as a lunatic restrained him. He could no longer work or sleep. There were whispering voices around him; the shadow of a woman on the wall outside his window suggested the fearful revenge of his feminist protagonists. One night he felt an electric current passing through his body. The stranger and his accomplices were evidently doing their murderous work in a thoroughly scientific manner. With the thought, "They are killing me. I will not be killed," he rose from the bed, found the proprietor, and obtained another room for the night. This happened to be under the one tenanted by the terrible stranger, and Strindberg's suspicions were confirmed by hearing a heavy object being dropped into a bag, and securely locked up. Evidently an electric machine, he thought. On the following day he packed up his belongings, and hurriedly left Hotel Orfila.

His suspicions fell on friends and foes alike. One day, after a sitting, Munch received a post card from Strindberg which put an end to further visits:

"When last you came to see me you looked like a murderer, or the accomplice of a murderer. I only want to inform you

that the Pettenkofer gas-oven in the room next to mine is unusable, and therefore unsuitable for the purpose. Sg."*

Side by side with the mania of which the message to Munch is typical, Strindberg retained a sanity during this time which Uddgren had occasion to observe. He went to see Strindberg at Hotel Orfila, and saw the traces of the torture through which he had passed in his haggard, ashen face. Uddgren had heard that Strindberg's insanity was on the point of breaking out, but in the course of a long talk with him he could find no signs of brain-softening. The mania, the eccentricities, the flashing imagination, the instinct for self-martyrisation were there intensified, but not the incoherency which he had observed in other literary friends who were victims of insanity. It is also remarkable that throughout Strindberg's period of lunacy his writings were accepted and printed.

After the flight from Hotel Orfila he hid himself in an hotel in rue de la Clef. All went well for some time. Feeling that he was at a safe distance from his persecutors,

* *En Ny Bok om Strindberg* af Gustaf Uddgren.

he abandoned his incognito, and sent his address to Hotel Orfila. There was an immediate recurrence of the attacks. An old man, with "grey and wicked eyes like a bear," carried empty cases, pieces of tin, and other mysterious objects into the room adjoining his. In the room overhead a noise of hammering and dragging began which suggested the installation of an infernal machine. The noisy preparations were followed by the sound of a revolving wheel, suggestive of preparations for his execution. "I am sentenced to death," he thought; but by whom? By the pietists, catholics, jesuits, theosophists? Was he condemned as a sorcerer or as a black magician? Or was it by the police? Was he suspected of being an anarchist? In the manners of the landlady and the servant he read suspicion and contempt. The struggle seemed hopeless. Preparing to die at the hands of his enemies, he arranged his papers, wrote necessary letters, and said a solemn farewell to Nature as represented by the Jardin des Plantes. "Farewell," he cried, "stones, plants, flowers, trees, butterflies, birds, snakes, all created by God's good hand." Resigned and at peace with Fate he re-entered his hotel,

but his anguish returned at the sight of the change which had been made in the room adjoining his. On the mantelpiece lay sheets of metal isolated from each other by pieces of wood, and on the top of each pile a book or a photographic album had been placed, so as to give an innocent look to what could be nothing but accumulators, infernal machines. Two workmen on the roof of a neighbouring house were handling some objects, and pointing to his window—the chain of evidence was complete.

At night he made the last toilet of the condemned, took a bath, shaved, and attired himself in a manner worthy of a solemn parting from the body and its miseries. Waiting for the end, he reflected that he could harbour no fear of hell in another world—he had passed through a thousand hells in this life. Anguish endowed him with a burning desire to quit the vanities and deceptive pleasures of the world. "Born with a heavenly nostalgia," he writes, "as a child I cried over the uncleanliness of existence; amongst relatives and in society I felt a stranger, far away from the land of my home. Ever since my childhood I have sought my God, and found the devil. I

carried the cross of Christ in my youth, and I have denied a God who is content to rule over slaves who love those who whip them."

After a few hours' sleep he was awakened by the sensation of being lifted out of bed by a pump, sucking his heart. He had scarcely put his feet on the floor before he felt an electric douche fall upon his neck, and press him to the ground. He rose, snatched his clothes, and rushed out into the garden. A light cough from the room, wherein dwelt his enemy, was answered by a cough from the other room. The conspirators were clearly signalling to each other. To return to the room of horror was out of question. He dragged an arm-chair into the garden, and finally went to sleep under the star-lit sky, soothed by the presence of the flowers. On the following morning he fled to friends in Dieppe, cursing his unknown enemies. His friends were horrified at his appearance, and when his kind hostess led him to a looking-glass he saw in his own face, not only the traces of suffering and neglect, but an expression which filled him with shame and detestation of himself. "If I had then read Swedenborg," he writes,

"the imprint left by the evil spirit would have explained to me my mental state and the events of the last weeks." Despite the efforts of his sympathetic friends to convince him that the house was free from dangers of any kind, the night brought new terrors. Sitting at a table, and waiting for the sinister moment when the clock should strike two, Strindberg was determined bravely to face the worst. Uncovering his chest, he challenged the unknown persecutors to strike him. The response was the sensation of an electric current directed against his heart, gradually increasing in strength until he could resist it no longer. As if struck by a clap of thunder, he felt his body filled by a fluid which was suffocating him, and drawing out his heart.

He rushed downstairs where another bed had been made up for him in case of need. He lay down, and tried to collect his thoughts. Could this be electricity? No, for he had used the compass as indicator, and the result had been negative. Whilst pondering on the mysterious force, another discharge of "electricity" struck him with the strength of a cyclone, and lifted him out of bed. He tried in vain to escape. His own graphic

description of what followed shows the agony through which he passed. "I hide behind walls, I lie down by the thresholds, and in front of the stoves. Everywhere, everywhere the furies seek me out. My soul's anguish overpowers me. The panic terror of everything and nothing gets hold of me, and I flee from room to room, and end my flight on the balcony, where I remain crouching." At dawn he went into his friend's studio, where he lay down on a rug. Even here he was disturbed, but now by rats, and, fearing that he might be a victim of delirium, he fled to the hall, where the door-mat became his resting-place. He hurriedly left Dieppe for the south of Sweden, and sought refuge in the house of his friend, Dr. Eliasson, in Ystad.

Strindberg had rightly surmised that his friends in Dieppe were convinced of his insanity. His conduct during the first days of his stay in Ystad caused his medical friend to treat him with the firmness and authority necessary towards one who is mentally irresponsible. The result was that Strindberg suspected that the doctor intended to imprison him in a lunatic asylum, and to appropriate his secret of gold-making.

The month which he spent at the doctor's house was devoted to a cold-water cure which did not assuage his misery. The shape and material of the bed in which he had to sleep suggested electrical devices of evil, the nightly assault by the vampire which sucked his heart was repeated, and brought him out of bed in terror of death; he heard voices, saw signs, feared he was being poisoned by hemlock, hashish, digitalis, or daturine. One night he heard the doctor handle a very heavy object and wind up a spring, and through the wall which separated them he felt the approach of the electric current. It reached his heart. Seizing his clothes he fled through the window into the street, and to the house of another physician who succeeded in calming him, and—so he believed—in intimidating his treacherous friend, and thus saved Strindberg's life.

These delusions of horror were suspended by a letter from his wife which breathed love and pity, and in which she invited him to come to Austria and see his little daughter. The thought of the child, of holding her in his arms, of begging her to forgive him, of making her happy by a father's tenderness, brought about a spiritual metamorphosis.

He left Sweden, and arrived at his mother-in-law's country house on the Danube in September, 1896. During the months which he spent there he did not meet his wife—a separation which he bore with equanimity, in consequence of "an indefinable lack of harmony in our temperaments"—but he saw the child daily.

"Every man, if he is sincere, may tread again for himself the road to Damascus—a journey which must vary for each individual soul," wrote Victor Hugo. Here, in the presence of the child, Strindberg was brought face to face with his own sinfulness. He had set out to persecute, but the light from heaven had prostrated him and struck him with blindness. Before the scales could fall from his eyes his penance must be made complete. He had left an infant of six weeks. The little girl of two and a half years, who now met him, scrutinised his soul with eyes full of serious inquiry, and then allowed her father to clasp her to his breast. "This is Dr. Faust's resurrection to earthly life, but sweeter and purer," he writes. "I cannot cease carrying the little one in my arms, and feeling her little heart beat against mine. To love a child is for a man to become

woman; it is to lay aside the manly, to experience the sexless love of the dwellers in heaven, as Swedenborg called it." But an incident soon occurred which disturbed his peace. At supper he gently touched the child's hand in order to help her. She cried out, and, drawing back her hand with a look full of horror, said, "He hurts me." Another evening he was humiliated by the mysterious conduct of the child. Pointing at an invisible person behind Strindberg's chair, she began to cry with fear, and said, "The sweep is standing there." Her grandmother who believed in clairvoyance in children made the sign of the cross over the child's head, and a painful silence fell upon the company.

Whilst he accepted these trials as punitive messages and warnings, his scarified soul became receptive to Roman Catholic influences. His wife's mother and aunt were Catholics; his child had been brought up in that faith. He had seen human souls sanctified by a catholic mysticism which bore humility and fortitude. The symbols, the certainty, the rich imagery of the Catholic Church had appealed to him, when the poverty of philosophical speculation had made him despair of human intelligence.

Photo by A. Blomberg, Stockholm

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In his home in Stockholm

He had bought a rosary in Paris because it was beautiful, and because "the evil ones were afraid of the cross." One day an image of the Madonna, carried through the streets of Paris on a cart following a hearse, had strangely attracted him. Like Tasso's vision of the Virgin in the midst of his feverish torment by noises and tinkling bells, Strindberg's gaze on the image of all-merciful motherhood brought comfort. At first attracted to Catholic prayers, and to the ideal of the monastic life by the instinct which makes the man in pain seek an anodyne, he was gradually led to a deeper understanding of esoteric Christianity. Swedenborg continued to reveal the mysteries of symbols and correspondences to him; in the scenery around the Austrian village he found, not only an exact replica of a Swedenborgian hell, but the original of a landscape which had precipitated itself in the zinc bath used in his gold-making experiments in Paris.

Strindberg's early blasphemies and atheism were the fruits of an inverted religiosity which left him no peace. His devotional mood could find no bridge of union with his scientific mood. The search for knowledge and the

search for God led to different goals. Whilst his brain struggled for breadth, his heart cried for the narrow depth of dogma and creed. His researches into occultism and the philosophy of religions, his acquaintance with theosophy did not reconcile his religion with his science. The sense of sin, of having sought unlawful knowledge haunted him in his studies of black magic and Satanism, and in the exercise of the occult powers of which he was conscious. Though Strindberg had not read Huysmans' *Là-Bas* and *En Route* when he wrote *Inferno*, there is a strong resemblance between the books and the religious evolution of the authors.

Strindberg accepted the doctrine of reincarnation as a Christian tenet, and the corollary of a Karmic law which compels us to suffer for sins committed before birth, but he resisted what he believed to be the central teaching of theosophy, *i.e.* the necessity for killing personality. A theosophical friend sent him Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* which Strindberg criticised severely, though he knew that his outspokenness would deprive him of a friend and a benefactor. He declined to join a "sect" which denied a personal God, the only one

who could satisfy his religious needs. He declared Madame Blavatsky's masterpiece to be "detestable through the conscious and unconscious deceptions, through the stories of the existence of Mahatmas," interesting through the quotations from little-known authors, condemnable, above all, as the work of "a gynander who has desired to outdo man, and who pretends to have overthrown science, religion, philosophy, and to have placed a priestess of Isis on the altar of the crucified One."

In spite of this denunciation, Strindberg had absorbed many theosophical ideas, and his later writings are not altogether free from the influence of the despised "gynander" and the theories of occult science which she expounded.

During the time spent in Austria Strindberg slowly recovered his mental balance, whilst his visionary powers and spiritual clairvoyance were in process of development. He stayed with his wife's mother and aunt, two pious and gentle old women, who treated his soul-sickness with Christian forbearance and healing sympathy. He was still subject to "astral" attacks, to "electric" discharges, to nightmares and ghostly visi-

tations. Unacquainted with the higher aspects of psychical research and modern theories of psychological phenomena, he was as yet unable to bring about order in the unruly house of his mind. Whether we use spiritualistic language and call him a medium, or that of psychology and label the messages which reached him "teleological automatism," there can be no doubt that the keynote of his soul's gloom and glory was a hypersensitiveness which made him a lightning-conductor for the psychic currents of his time. We may turn away with disdain from the pitiful picture of Strindberg at his writing table, warding off the imaginary attacks of elementals, incubi, lamiæ, by thrusts in the air with a dalmatian dagger, and we may smile at the childish superstition with which he accepted the oracular guidance of the cock on the top of Notre Dame, or the direction chosen by a ladybird visiting his manuscript. But that there were within him cryptopsychic gifts of telepathy, clairaudience, and divination, a somnambulistic consciousness of a reality other than that which is cognisable to the senses, no student of psychic forces can doubt.

In December, 1896, Strindberg returned

to Sweden. Swedenborg's *Arcana Cœlestia*, which he now read, dissipated his fears of persecution by showing him that all the horrors through which he had passed, were recognised by Swedenborg as incidental to the purgation of soul which is the highest object of life. Strindberg found that, before receiving his momentous revelations, Swedenborg had passed through nightly tortures resembling his own. By informing him of the real nature of the horrors Swedenborg liberated him from the electricians, the black magicians, the destroyers, the jealous gold-makers, and the fear of madness. "He has shown me the only path to salvation: to seek out the demons in their dens within myself, and to kill them . . . through repentance."

Inferno was composed in Lund, the little University town in the south of Sweden, between May 3rd and June 25th, 1897. *Legends*, which is but a rifacimento of the struggle to slay the "demons in their dens," was begun in Lund, and finished in Paris in October, 1897. In March, 1898, Strindberg went back to Lund, free from haunting obsessions of evil, master of his madness, enriched by religious experiences which pro-

duced an exuberant rise of new ideas. He had crossed the Rubicon. Henceforth he shared in that direct vision which makes paralysing doubt impossible, and which is the prerogative of God's fools all over the world. To the end of life his mind retained intellectual disquiet; there remained in him a strain of the wild man, an over-balance of curiosity which set up eternal enmity between him and convention. The Swedish critic, Oscar Levertin, succinctly summed up Strindberg in the Italian proverb: *All soul, all gall, all fire.* But after 1898 there is a calm light which the unruly flames cannot hide. His spiritual wrestlings continue through the zenith of his literary production, but they leave him stronger.

A comparison between his views on the "nature of man" in 1884 and in 1910 is interesting. In an essay on *The Joy of Life*, written in 1884, he greatly offended the Swedish Mrs. Grundy by the following passage: "After long centuries of the voluntary or involuntary lie, of artificialising custom and speech, a general craving for brutality is sometimes awakened, a delirious desire to throw off one's clothes and walk about naked, to reveal the indecent, to approach the

repulsive, to be a happy and joyous animal." In an article on *Religion*, written in 1910, and published in *Speeches to the Swedish Nation*, he wrote: "I apply my biblical Christianity to my own personal and inner use, so as to curb my somewhat riotous nature, rendered riotous by the veterinary philosophy and animal doctrine (Darwinism) in which I was brought up. The fact that I practise, as far as I can, the Christian doctrines should not, I maintain, give people reason to complain. For it is only through religion, or the hope for something better, and the realisation of the inner meaning of life as a time of probation, a school, possibly a house of correction, that we can bear life's burden with sufficient resignation. In the understanding of the relative insignificance of external conditions of life, compared with the possession of hope and faith, one finds that moral courage to renounce everything—which the ungodly lack —to suffer everything for the sake of a mission, to speak out when others remain silent."

In the same "speech" he says: "Since 1896 I call myself a Christian (see *Inferno*). I am not a Catholic, and have never been one,

but during seven years' life in Catholic countries and in intimate relationship with Catholics I discovered that there was no difference between Catholicism and Protestantism, or merely an outward one, and that the schism which took place once was purely political, or was only concerned with theological points which in reality have nothing to do with religion. This was the cause of my tolerance towards Catholics which found a special expression in my *Gustavus Adolphus*, and gave rise to the fable about my being a Catholic. I am entered on the parish register as a Protestant, and shall remain one, but I am probably not orthodox, nor am I a pietist, but rather a Swedenborgian."

At the time when *Inferno* was written Strindberg was, however, more completely under the spell of Rome than he acknowledges in his later writings. He contemplated retreat in a Belgian monastery, and in *Inferno* he tells us that, when he read Sar Peladan's *Comment on devient Mage*, "Catholicism held its solemn and triumphant entry into my life." He found many points of contact between Swedenborg's mystical philosophy and that of the Catholic Church. The pro-

found influence on modern thought exercised by Swedenborg, and which is clearly discernible in the writings of Goethe, Emerson, Balzac, Tennyson, Mrs. Browning, Ruskin, Coventry Patmore, and Carlyle, is evidence of the spiritual catholicity of the great Swedish mystic. Superficial criticism is apt to dismiss Swedenborg as a deluded ghost-seer, whose psychical derangements are responsible for a farrago of communications on heaven and hell, prodigiously wearisome in details and lacking the saving grace of humour. Such criticism is made by those who know nothing of the intellectual versatility, and the scientific achievements of Swedenborg. His writings on anatomy, physiology, geology, and metallurgy alone would have entitled him to a distinguished place among the pioneers of science. Swedenborg studied mechanics, engineering, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, and music, and took a keen interest in handicrafts.

There is a striking resemblance between Swedenborg and Strindberg in this versatility of mood and thought. It is emphasised by many minor traits of character and taste, such as the great love for children and flowers which both evinced. Separated by more than a cen-

tury and a half, Strindberg found himself the spiritual descendant of Swedenborg. To him he dedicates his first *Blue Book* (1907) in the following words: "To Emanuel Swedenborg, Teacher and Leader, this book is dedicated by the Disciple." The *Blue Books* deal with every thinkable subject—religious, philosophical, scientific—in an aphoristic and combative manner which is pervaded by a curious mixture of pride and humility. Here speaks the High Priest of Knowledge, here quivers the helpless embryo of the humanity which is to come. In these motley pages the Teacher and the Disciple talk of telepathy, chemistry, astronomy, meteorology, spectral analysis, atoms and crystals, the psychology of plants, the secrets of birds, the formation of clouds, Darwinism, radium, woman, the secrets of chess, the secrets and magic of numbers, the Mesopotamian language, hieroglyphics, Hebraic research, symbolism, clairvoyance, and a hundred other subjects. In the preface to *The Bondswoman's Son* Strindberg speaks of his *Blue Book* as the synthesis of his life. The Disciple is worthy of the Master; to the Swedenborgian and eighteenth-century conception of the natural world and the

spiritual world Strindberg has added the craving for a synthetic interpretation of facts, which was characteristic of the nineteenth century, and which found its foremost representatives in Spencer and Comte. In his sense of truth, in his work for the correlation of knowledge, in his readiness to forsake pleasant beliefs for unpleasant facts, Strindberg realised Swedenborg's description of a certain phase of angelic life: "To grow old in heaven is to grow young."

The renewal of intellectual youth, with its baffling polymathy and self-contradictions, led Strindberg to question the composition of his own soul. In the preface to *The Bondswoman's Son* he confesses that he has sometimes wondered if he has incarnated different personalities. Dissociated fields of consciousness may be a psychopathic phenomenon, or indicative of an advanced state of psychic evolution. The problem has been approached from many points of view. The mystery of personality metamorphosis, of primary and secondary individualities, contained within the frame of one human body, is now a recognised subject of inquiry in the domain of abnormal psychology. Cases of multiple personality in which there is an absolute

division between the "entities," and in which the memories do not intermingle, have been carefully studied and classified. The ease with which Strindberg apostatised, the mutually destructive theories which he advanced at different periods of life, the power with which he could objectify his past selves, and repeatedly paint "the face of what was once myself," point to a multiplicity of consciousness which, though not rare in genius, was especially active in him. In the preface to *The Author*, written in 1909, Strindberg says of himself as the writer of the book twenty years earlier: "The personality of the author is just as much a stranger to me as to the reader—and just as unsympathetic."

There is undoubtedly a gulf between the personality responsible for the preface to *Lady Julie* with its crude materialism, and the sensitised consciousness of the man who pours out his soul in the *Blue Books* and in *Alone*. Nietzscheanism was but a cloak, with which Strindberg covered the *cor laceratum*, which always suffered acutely through the misfortunes of others. The cloak did not fit him. In *Alone*, the dulcet autobiographical finale to the agitato of

Inferno, we find him in self-imposed and vicarious suffering for the sins of a neighbouring grocer who has failed in business through incompetence and dishonesty. "I went through all his agony," he writes; "thought of his wife, of the approaching quarter-day, of the rent, of the cheques." Strindberg now lived in open enmity with the theories of the survival of the fittest and natural selection; his conception of the evolution idea led him to repudiate the current belief in the descent of man as a glorification of brute-nature, and to cry: "What a shame to have paid homage to the Ape-King, the seducer of my youth!"

To the natural capacity for suffering was added that imposed on him through the development of his psychic powers. He did not only live the lives of others "telepathically"; his sensibility became so exteriorised as to receive impressions at a great distance. Thus he used to feel, when one of his plays was being performed for the first time in some part of Europe, though he had received no information in regard to the performance. In 1907 he told Uddgren that, after going to bed at ten in the evening, he was sometimes awakened by the sound

of loud applause which caused him to sit up in bed, wondering if he was at a theatre. Such a telepathic ovation was invariably followed by the news of some dramatic success. In the first *Blue Book*, "the Disciple" relates the following: "In a company I interrupted myself with a smile in the middle of an animated conversation. 'What are you smiling at?' somebody asked. 'The southern express pulled up at the Central Station just now,' was the reply. Another time something similar happened, and I said: 'The curtain has now fallen on the last act in Helsingfors, and I heard the applause after my first night.' I perceive the talk of the people in restaurants after the performance as ringing in the ears. I can hear this all the way from Germany when I have a first performance, though I have no previous knowledge of being played."

He records the psychic rapport which sexual union establishes between him, and the woman he loves. When she is absent, and thinks kindly of him, he perceives the fragrance of incense or jessamine; when she is travelling he knows if she is on a steamer or in a train. He can distinguish the throbbing

of the propeller from the thumping of the buffers on the railway carriage.

The most remarkable passage in the *Blue Book* is perhaps the following summary of his *clairpsychism:*

"I feel at a distance when somebody touches my fate, when enemies threaten my personal existence, but also when people speak kindly of me or wish me well; I feel in the street if I meet friend or enemy; I have participated in the suffering caused by an operation on a person towards whom I feel comparatively indifferent; I have twice gone through the death agony of others with attendant physical and mental suffering; the last time I passed through three diseases in six hours, and rose well when the absent one had been liberated through death. This makes life painful, but rich and interesting."

CHAPTER VIII

THE THEATRE OF LIFE

STRINDBERG'S fiftieth birthday was celebrated quietly in Lund in 1899. A general feeling of distrust and bewilderment was prevalent amongst his countrymen. At the age of fifty he had returned to Sweden, apparently healthy in mind and body, in the prime of life, charged with a literary vitality which confounded current theories of his insanity. He had calmly and unostentatiously resumed his task of writing drama. The haunted, feverish expression had left his countenance; he had made himself a new visage, upon which were stamped self-mastery and tranquillity of mind. And, yet, he had recently published *Inferno* and *Legends*, and laid bare his soul's misery and delirium in throbbing pages, over which the reviewers had poured acrid contempt. He had written *To Damascus* in a gust of mediæval repentance, and uncovered himself in the transports of asceticism. With a sigh of relief his enemies

AUGUST STRINDBERG

BUST BY K. I. ELDH

(Bought by the Swedish State. In the National Museum, Stockholm)

PORTRAIT BY CARL LARSSON, 1899

(In the National Museum, Stockholm)

had laid aside their opposition to his indiscretions and revelations, his materialism and transcendentalism, his socialism and individualism. They felt that there was no need to take a lunatic seriously. His friends had waited patiently for the "dancing star" which they knew would arise out of the chaos.

The Saga of the Folkungs, *Gustavus Vasa* and *Eric XIV* appeared in 1899, and showed that the author of *Master Olof* had returned to the art with which, twenty-seven years earlier, he had given his country its greatest historical play. With the precision of the somnambulist who takes up the thread of mental events, regardless of the time that has passed, Strindberg resumed the story of *Master Olof* where he had left off. In *Gustavus Vasa* we again meet Olof, the renegade, but he is now—as befits his character—a secondary person, duly subservient to the Power of the Time, King Gustavus Vasa. With *Gustavus Vasa* and *Eric XIV* Strindberg attained to mastery of a dramatic art, in which he stands unsurpassed. The art of writing *the psychological drama of history* is his, and his alone. No other dramaturge of modern times has approached him

in clarity of historical vision, or in imaginative reconstruction of living characters which are at once true to their time and to all times.

No period of Swedish history lends itself better to dramatic treatment than that dominated by the first of the Vasas, Gustavus Erikson, the chosen king of the people, the incarnation of will, of a wholly masculine personality. The king's struggle to quell the rebellious spirit of the freemen of Dalecarlia, the vast inland county north of Stockholm, to whom he owes his throne and his power, is the subject of the play. The wrath of the king pervades the first act with an atmospheric suggestion of fateful horror which is the antithesis of melodramatic art, and shows Strindberg's power of restraint and concentration in the unfoldment of tragedy. The king has marched to Dalecarlia in order to punish the stiff-necked peasants who think that they can make and unmake kings with impunity. When the curtain rises upon the assembled leaders of the peasants the king is not seen, but his presence is felt. Master Olof has arrived as the emissary of the sovereign; solemn messengers bid the veterans of the soil to remain seated until they are called to appear before the king. There is a sense

of suppressed fear in the room; the quiet, slow-thinking men, clad in white sheep-skin coats, suspect something, but cannot grasp the unthinkable audacity of the king's plans. One by one they are called out, but no one returns. Then a messenger from the king brings in three blood-stained sheep-skin coats, and throws them on the table. This is the king's warning to those who remain, and who are permitted to live.

In the five acts of this play Strindberg lets us see the human qualities of Gustavus Vasa; the dramatist draws a living soul, not a marionette; a man, hot-tempered, hard, strong, with a vein of irresoluteness running through the granite of his will, a man whose strength is blended with the weakness of the child within that never grows up. We see in him the inconsistency of all flesh: the mighty reformer of the Roman Catholic Church who upholds evangelical Lutheranism and yet clings to catholic habits; the brutal tyrant who has a way of his own of enforcing obedience by bringing his little steel hammer in ominous contact with obstinate heads, and who yet remains the kind, fatherly friend of his people. The patriarch who has identified himself with his

country before the Lord, who has stood forth as a prophet of patriotism, and who is forced by growing self-knowledge to separate the personal from the impersonal, is at last humiliated by the goodness of others. Threatened by rebels who march towards Stockholm from the south, outwitted by his treacherous allies in Lübeck, the old king trembles at the news that the sturdy men of Dalecarlia are on their way to Stockholm. The retribution for his harsh deeds of suppression is upon him, and he bows his head before the chastisement of God. But the men of Dalecarlia are made of stuff which outlasts a few fallen heads. They have come in their thousands to help their king and their country to put the common enemy to flight. Engelbrecht, their leader—jolly, true and a little tipsy—bursts into the king's palace, and proudly offers him the arms and the devotion of the men in sheep-skin coats, true representatives of the Swedish spirit.

Eric, the king's dissolute and epileptic son, heir to the throne, is in every way a contrast to his father : he is the chronic weakling who oscillates between unholy desire and self-disgust, the born pariah in the realm of the mind, whether he be clad in purple or in rags.

Of such, we think, the Kingdom of Heaven is not made. Yet Strindberg shows us Eric's glimpse of heaven. In the fourth act Eric and his boon companion and evil counsellor, Göran Persson, bent on the pleasures of the tavern, meet Karin, the flowergirl. She asks Eric to buy her wreath of flowers :

Prince Eric (*looks fixedly at the girl*). Who—is—that ?

Göran Persson. A flowergirl.

Prince Eric. No—it—is—something else—do you see ?

Göran Persson. What am I supposed to see ?

Prince Eric. You ought to see what I see, but you can't.

The girl kneels before the prince. He takes the wreath from her hands, places it on her head, and asks her to rise. " Rise, my child," he says, " you must not kneel before me, but I shall kneel before you. I do not want to ask your name, for I know you, though I have never seen you, or heard anything about you." He begs her to ask a favour of him. She asks him to buy her flowers. Eric takes a ring off his finger, and gives it to the girl. She dare not wear it, and returns it. She leaves them, and Eric asks Göran if he has not seen the marvellous apparition, heard the wonderful

voice. Göran has heard nothing but the voice of a common lass, a little cheeky.

Prince Eric. Hold your tongue, Göran, I love her.

Göran Persson. She is not the first one.

Prince Eric. Yes, the first one, the only one.

Göran Persson. Well, seduce her then.

Prince Eric (*draws his sword*). Take care, or by God——

Göran Persson. Is he going to prick me now again?

Prince Eric. I do not know what has happened, but from this moment I detest you; I cannot live in the same town as you; you pollute me with your eyes, your whole being stinks. Therefore I leave you, and never want to see you before my face again. I leave you as if an angel had come to fetch me from the dwellings of the wicked; I detest the past, as I detest you and myself. (*Follows Karin.*)

Though Strindberg shows an understanding of love's miracles—with which he is not generally credited—he makes no attempt to endow the first meeting between Eric and the peasant girl who became the mother of his children, and finally his queen, with a greater transfiguring power than it possessed. Here, as in all his historical dramas, he writes with the sense of the importance of the infinitely small, with the knowledge that " characters " and events arise out of the mind's contact with things that seem insignificant to the

superficial observer. The wooden rigidity which the ordinary historian gives to the figures of the past, is the result of the incapacity to visualise the daily, the commonplace, in lives lived long ago. Strindberg's psychological conception of characters of the past is based on an almost microscopical power of seeing details. His own hypersensitive emotional memory initiated him into the manner, in which history is made by mood and temper, aches and pains—as well as by deliberate purpose of will and political programmes. Whether it be true or not that the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was due to the toothache of Louis XIV, and that history was thus made by the ill-timed activity of molar nerves, psychological research into the origin of great events on the world's stage would reveal causes which the historian does not deign to consider.

Eric XIV, the drama of the reign of the mad son of the sane King Gustavus, is a masterpiece of life-like presentation. Searching comparisons between the arts of Strindberg and Shakespeare are otiose. But in the dramatic treatment of lunacy the author of *Eric XIV* may well be compared with the author of *Hamlet*, *Lear*, and *Macbeth*. The

dramatic verisimilitude of Strindberg's lunatics is made perfect through an experiential familiarity with the nethermost adventures of the mind, which Shakespeare lacked. In *Eric XIV* the monomania of persecution, the fitful *délires de grandeur*, the half-conscious cruelty are drawn with a spontaneous realism which is heightened by a terrible psychological accuracy of analysis. Strindberg has drawn almost as many mad and half-mad folk as Shakespeare. He can describe every form of mental derangement, and has not forgotten the soul obsessed by God and, therefore, detached from the world. In *The Saga of the Folkungs* the Voice of the Unseen speaks through an obsessed woman who sees the souls of people, and is able to reveal the hidden treachery of those who surround King Magnus. "One must be mad," says a barber in this play, "to have the courage to reveal all secrets at once." In *Easter*, the most mystical of Strindberg's plays, he draws an exquisite character of a young girl who is "mad," whose soul is pure and lovely, and who sees and hears things that happen far away. To her, also, all secrets are open; she can see the stars during the daytime, and, though her head is "soft," her spirit dwells in the

realms of pure beauty. There is a fool in *To Damascus;* there is the frenzy of despair in *The Father.* The novels *Remorse, At the Edge of the Sea* and *The Gothic Rooms* present a gallery of psycho-pathological types.

Strindberg's novelistic treatment of lunacy has a natural profuseness of imagination, not unlike that of E. T. A. Hoffmann and Dostoevsky. It therefore bears little resemblance to the more artificial composition, typified by Paul Hervieu's *L'Inconnu* or Guy de Maupassant's *Le Horla.*

The scenes in *Eric XIV* are constructed with a finished workmanship, and an economy of events which make it one of Strindberg's most playable pieces. Consumed by jealous hatred of his brother, Johan, Eric keeps him a prisoner; a prey of malignant suspicion against everybody, Eric commits atrocious murders and endures frantic remorse. At last, Eric's excesses can no longer be endured by the people. He is imprisoned, and Johan becomes king. In *Eric XIV* the psychological dissection of character does not hinder the dramatic movement of the play; the playwright combines brilliant impressionism with due subservience to the laws of the theatre. In *The Saga of the Folkungs* he has

allowed the psychological treatment to usurp the domain of drama. The play deals with a period in Swedish history when two brother kings occupied the throne. Here, too, we have sombre tragedy. There is no lack of dramatic elements, for the horrors of plague, hanging, flagellants and execution are shown upon the stage. But Strindberg has psychologised his characters so intensely that the flesh has, as it were, fallen away from their souls, and with that the obscurity of motives and objects which creates the deception upon which human action is built, and which is essential to drama. The effect of the play on the spectator is the intense, yet real, terror of a nightmare, from which we vainly struggle to awaken. The over-balance of psychological analysis mars some of the later historical dramas. It makes some of the transcendental plays and the chamber plays mere dramatic dialogues, pictures of minds in conflict; it gives us the Shadow Theatre of the Soul, and leads Strindberg to bold defiance of the rules of dramaturgy—including those laid down by himself.

The cycle of the Vasa plays—*Master Olof*, *Gustavus Vasa* and *Eric XIV*—bears the mark of the consummate craftsman. Their strength

is the strength of reality, their beauty a perfect proportion of dramatic construction. A row of historical plays followed: *Gustavus Adolphus* (1900); *Engelbrecht* (1901); *Charles XII* (1901); *Gustavus III* (1903); *Queen Christina* (1903); *The Nightingale of Wittenberg* (1903); *The Last Knight* (1908); *The National Director* (1909); *The Earl of Bjälbo* (1909). Of these, *Gustavus Adolphus* with its breadth of battlefield panorama; *Charles XII* with its narrow searchlight on the declining figure of the lion-hearted, but beaten king; *Queen Christina* with its flamboyant sketch of the clever and capricious daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, are eminently playable. *Gustavus III* has pointed dialogue, cameo-like pictures of word-fencing; it faithfully paints the decadent time when Sweden was steeped in the sterile scepticism of France; it portrays the reaction which led to the assassination of the King of Masquerades, but the play is not woven with the dramaturgic skill of the former dramas. *The Last Knight* is an historical jugglery with ideas in five acts which strains the dramatic form beyond its measure of elasticity.

It would require a separate volume to deal

adequately with Strindberg's historical writings. It is not only his dramas which bear testimony to the originality of his historical conception, but a number of treatises, essays, and stories, such as *Studies in the History of Culture, The Swedish People, Swedish Destinies and Adventures, Historical Miniatures,* and *The Conscious Will in the History of the World.* His independent historical researches unearthed documents and accumulated evidence with a painstaking thoroughness which should have endowed him with a special "authority." But he has been derided and abused because of his lack of a truly professorial treatment of historical characters. His powers of visualisation and interpretation have given offence to historical specialists. He has been accused of distorting the calm faces of royal personages, of encumbering his pictures of the past with ugly and unnecessary details. He has been condemned because there is a twentieth-century atmosphere about his characters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But we may well ask: Has any historical chronicler or dramatist ever given a faithful representation of the past except through the medium of his own personality, his own time? There

are anachronisms in *Hamlet;* so there are in *Eric XIV.* In a wider sense, all historical writings are anachronistic. In that sense Strindberg's history is less burdened with errors than that of most writers. The offence which Strindberg committed—if it be an offence—is that he saw and threw upon the canvas the lasting psychological features which persist through the vicissitudes of time, through the altered conditions of morality, custom, and nationality. He saw the eternally human beneath the masks of canonised and apotheosised individuals.

Gustavus Adolphus, Strindberg's drama of the fair hero-king of Sweden who played an illustrious part in the Thirty Years' War, and who landed with twenty thousand men in Pomerania in 1630 as friend and protector of oppressed Protestants in Germany, has all the elements of a powerful historical play. It has been severely criticised in Sweden and in Germany. Strindberg has himself explained that the Swedes objected to his portrait of Gustavus Adolphus because he had made him too small, and the Germans objected because he had made the conquering hero too great. Strindberg did not hesitate to show the blemishes on the historical idol of Sweden:

the weakness, the impetuousness, the spells of fear, the carelessness, the moral elasticity which characterised Gustavus Adolphus. Nor did he hesitate to show the horrors and self-deception of war, the blackguardly deeds which are glorified by militarism, or the petty quarrels between Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists which prolonged the strife. The king is represented as being brought—by the force of events—to see the unworthiness of the cause which he espouses, and for which he finally dies. This was an unpardonable offence against the sacro-sanctity of tradition, and the fact that Strindberg's Gustavus Adolphus lost none of his heroic qualities by being stripped of pseudo-angelic ones did not temper the wind of the general condemnation. The famous generals of the Swedish army, Horn, Banér, Tott, Brahe, Torstensson, Stenbock, have been shorn of none of their glory.

In *Charles XII* Strindberg repeats the offence committed in *Gustavus Adolphus*. With irreverent and destructive hands Charles XII broke the greatness of Sweden,* builded by Gustavus Adolphus, and Strindberg merci-

* In 1658 the kingdom of Sweden included the whole of the present Sweden and Finland, and in addition Esthonia, Livonia, part of Ingermanland, Pomerania, Wismar, Bremen and Verden.

lessly analyses the foolhardy mind of Charles XII, through which his campaigns and his country were foredoomed to disaster.

The attacks made upon Strindberg by those who cling to stereotyped methods of historical judgment have but served to show the importance of the method which he inaugurated. It will undoubtedly guide the historian of the future. The average historian moulds his material to the conventional view; he has no place for the shapes of originality which, but for his cramped pages, would stand forth lifelike and real. Mr. William Archer tells us that the historical dramatist must not flagrantly defy or disappoint popular knowledge or prejudice. But popular knowledge can take no account of the deeper psychological traits which it is the business of the historical dramatist to discover. Mr. Archer holds that the dramatist must not run counter to "generally accepted tradition." "New truth, in history," he adds, "must be established either by new documents, or by a careful and detailed reinterpretation of old documents; but the stage is not the place either for the production of documents or for historical exegesis."*

* *Play-Making. A Manual of Craftsmanship*, by William Archer.

Those who thus separate the known past from the revivifying influence of imaginative art seek to impose the academic view of history upon the artistic conscience. That conscience is never free from impressions of the accumulated experience of the past. Every play which depicts yesterday's customs, manners, costumes, conflicts of thought and morality is "historical," and artistic exegesis alone can make real to us that which is absent from school treatises, statistics and blue-books.

The series of plays which have been designated as symbolical, transcendental, mystical and mad—according to the mental outlook of the reader—bring us nearest to the real Strindberg, to the essential in his imaginative art which, though illusive and often completely submerged, yet stands forth as the structure of his life. To this series belong *To Damascus*, I and II (1898), *Advent* (1899), *The Dance of Death*, I and II (1901), *Easter* (1901), *The Crown Bride* (1902), *Swanwhite* (1902), *The Dream Play* (1902), *The Great Highway* (1909). In these plays we have the eternal questions of the human mind, the joys of illusion, the sorrows of knowledge, the fruits of sin and hatred, the rise through pain and suffering, the soul's battle with relentless

Photo by Sandels

STRINDBERG IN HIS LIBRARY IN THE "BLUE TOWER," 1911

His Last Home in Stockholm

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fate, the awful mystery of existence, and the ultimate hope of something better to come, cast into the weird and haunting shapes of the people of Strindberg's inner world; the souls that are at once real and unreal, mad and sane, acting in the solid world of matter, and held in shadowy bondage by the mists of dreamland. Here we meet them all, the souls that have gone by, that are here around us, that are yet to come. They meet us with tears and smiles, with lies and truth, with virtue and vice, pathetic and repulsive, lovable and loathsome—humanity.

Strindberg suggests the soul's corruption and the soul's ineffable sweetness with the same impassioned power of creation. In *Swanwhite*, the charming fairy play in which the influence of Maeterlinck is discernible, the budding love between a fairy-like princess and a chivalrous prince is described with a delicacy which brings the reader into a land of romance and roses, of stainless purity and spring-like innocence. In *Advent* we are brought into the house of wickedness, of cruel, designing, ancient wickedness. The old judge and his wife are steeped in every variety of human treachery and vileness. They die, and we follow them into the darkness of hell,

where the seven deadly sins have grouped themselves around the throne of the monarch. Through the pain of being made to see themselves as they really are, they cry out for light. In both pieces the " supernatural " plays the most important part ; the wicked stepmother in *Swanwhite* exhales a breath of evil before which the rose fades, and the dove falls dead ; the ill-treated children in *Advent* are comforted by a mysterious playmate, clad in white, who brings light into the dark cellar in which they have been imprisoned. The story in *The Crown Bride* of a peasant girl, who kills her child, is told with an exalted simplicity, and given a setting of the old fairy-faith of Dalecarlia which peoples the rivers with nature-spirits and the forests with *trolls*. Here, as in the other fairy plays, things are endowed with souls, and the fierce hatred between the two old peasant families is reflected by every object that surrounds them. Unknown forces are all the time engaged in a mystic underplay which is the real action of the piece.

The law of *karma*—the chain of cause and effect—runs through all these plays, and binds together the psychological sequence where the dramatic construction fails. In *Easter*

Strindberg has drawn the anguish of a little bourgeois family, labouring under the misfortunes following upon the father's defalcations. He is in prison, and Elis, his son, a schoolmaster, who is meticulously honest, is weighed down by shame, and tormented by the fear that the man to whom the father is heavily indebted, will exercise his right and seize the furniture. The family look upon this man, Lindkvist, as an ogre, and when they learn that he has come to live in the same town they are in constant fear that he will ruin them. Throughout the three acts of this very playable piece Strindberg gives a highly finished and concentrated picture of those multiple and long-lived sufferings of the innocent, which follow in the wake of transgressions committed by the guilty. But he makes Lindkvist an arbiter of fate, a messenger of hope who shows that good as well as evil is minutely recorded in the great Book of Events. For long ago when Elis' father was a young man, and before he placed himself within the meshes of the law, he did Lindkvist a kindness. That kindness has never been forgotten; it lay like a seed of life in Lindkvist's soul, and, as it grew, it made him a generous man. And thus Lind-

kvist forgives and forgets, and the spirit of Easter is resurrected in the hearts of the family. Eleonora, the pure and tender-spirited girl who went mad on the day when her father was sent to prison, is wrongfully suspected of having stolen a daffodil plant in the shop of the adjoining florist. The symbolism of the piece is made complete by the strange play of the shadow of paternal crime on the guiltless child. In her mad innocence of the world's ways Eleonora has taken the flowerpot and left a shilling and her name on the counter, but the coin and the name are not seen by the agitated shopkeeper who is anxious to brand the suspected culprit. The "theft" is at last satisfactorily explained. Eleonora speaks with the wisdom of many lives when she says: "I was born old . . . I knew everything already when I was born, and when I learnt something I only recollected. When I was four years old I knew men's . . . thoughtlessness and foolishness, and therefore people were unkind to me."

The force of suggestion, the primary importance of thought form the keynote of several of Strindberg's plays. In *Eric XIV* he lets Göran Persson say to Eric: "King and friend, you so often use the word hate

that at last you imagine yourself to be the enemy of humanity. Don't use it ! The word is the first realisation of the creative force, and you throw a spell over yourself by this incantation. Say ' love ' a little oftener, and you will imagine yourself loved." *There are Crimes and Crimes*, a play in four acts which has been a great theatrical success, is built around the subtle force of evil thought. Maurice, a dramatist of the Bohemian world in Paris, who is about to receive the laurels of fame deserts his mistress and his child to follow a woman bent on pleasure only ; in the elation of their passion they wish death to Maurice's child and destruction to all obstacles in their way. The child dies mysteriously in the morning, and through a combination of malign circumstances Maurice is accused of being the murderer. He is innocent, but he has sinned in thought, and when, at the end of the fourth act, he is mercifully extracted from the vortex, into which he has brought himself, the Abbé says to him : " You were not innocent, for we are also responsible for our thoughts, words, desires, and you murdered in thought when your evil will wished for the death of your child."

There are Crimes and Crimes does full justice to Strindberg as an accomplished stage craftsman; in *The Dance of Death* we have, perhaps, the most sharply chiselled dramatic form of all his later plays. It is a symphony of married hatred and misery in which the orchestration is perfect. The dialogue is at once natural and calculated; the silent play of the piece even more intensely suggestive than the spoken words. We get glimpses of the dramatic art of bygone days: that of Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides; we are mercilessly ground in the mill of a ghastly nineteenth-century problem play. The figure of the Captain of the Fortress, the untruthful, scheming old rascal who has attained to a diabolical mastery in the art of making others unhappy and uncomfortable, is drawn with a supreme irony which makes it unique in vital drama. Amongst Strindberg's realistic plays it has another distinction: it represents his only stage-creation of a vampire-like *husband*. The wife is naturally not far behind him. Death stands behind the central figures of the play, the dancing death of Holbein and Saint-Saëns. The strains of his tune drown the jarring notes of conflict, and bring the

voice of hope to the Captain's lips: "Wipe out, and pass on!"

The trilogy *To Damascus*, with its autobiographical wanderings on the crooked paths of experience, is perhaps the strangest literary play ever written. It contains the elements of the old miracle and morality plays, the soul's battle with itself and with the Devil, its final renouncement of the world and entry into the new Life. "The Stranger" meets "The Lady"; together they journey from station to station on the road of suffering and disillusionment. They part in hatred, and meet again in the vicissitudes of love. They separate finally as The Stranger attains to peace, religious peace, in the monastery of dead passions on the top of the hill. The stages that lie between the beginning and the end of the journey are described in scenes which are both possible and impossible. The Beggar, The Doctor, The Sister, The Mother, The Old Man, The Confessor, The Abbess, The Fool, The Shadows, and The Children all take their assigned parts as separate individuals. And yet they seem to be one and the same, fragments of a multiple personality. All things and all thoughts come back in this play like the top spun by a skilful player of

diabolo. The Stranger climbs a mountain, and arrogantly threatens the Lord of the skies with a cross which he has snatched from a Calvary. He falls, and is found in raving delirium by the kind Samaritans of the Convent who bring him to their hospital. He regains consciousness, and finds himself seated at a table in the Refectory in company with the shades of all whom he has injured, or with whose fate his own is bound up. The scene is one of the deepest religious realism. It has a touch of that crushing and unreasonable sense of guilt which often accompanies the return to physical life of one who has been to the very gates of death. The curse of Deuteronomy is read by The Confessor, and every word brands the memory of The Stranger with the seal of The Law. Of this consciousness of guilt The Stranger says: "There are moments when I feel as if I carried within me all the sin and sorrow and uncleanliness and shame of the world; there are moments when I believe that the wicked act, crime itself, is an imposed punishment."

The world gives a banquet in honour of The Stranger, who has succeeded in making gold. But the banquet is so arranged as to show the envy and hatred and treachery which lie

behind the festive speeches, the fickleness of public approval. In the portrait gallery of the monastery The Stranger is shown the real selves of great men who have been honoured for their consistency, whilst they have been bundles of inconsistencies—Napoleon, Luther, Voltaire, Goethe, Bismarck. The yearning for the peace that passeth all understanding is well expressed when The Stranger, bruised and tired, weary of searching and self-disgust, sees the white monastery on the hill and cries :

" Anything so white I never before beheld on this dirty earth, except in my dreams ; yes, this is my youth's dream of a house wherein dwell peace and purity. I greet thee, white house . . . Now, I am at home."

It is as if the heat of imagination, which produced some of Strindberg's great books, were too great to permit him to leave a subject, when, artistically, it is finished. After *Inferno* he wrote *Legends* which was but a faint echo. The theme of *To Damascus* is weakly repeated in *The Great Highway,* a drama in verse and prose which also deals with the soul's fearful struggle and disillusionment. *To Damascus* contains some shallow thoughts and some banalities of expres-

sion, but it is a powerful creation, magnificently conceived. In *The Great Highway* the mysticism falls flat, the play does not grip by any poetic power; it is an *olla podrida* of its author's philosophy of life which sometimes is not even lukewarm. But it does contain some gems of lyrical beauty, and one or two passages in which Strindberg reaches his own heights.

The Dream Play is a new conception and a new art. In a memorandum to the play Strindberg writes: "In this Dream Play, as in the previous one *To Damascus*, the author has sought to imitate the disconnected, but apparently logical form of the dream. Anything may happen; everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist; on an insignificant background of reality imagination spins threads and weaves new patterns: a mixture of memories, experiences, free fancies, absurdities and improvisations. The characters split, double, multiply, evaporate, solidify, diffuse, clarify. But one consciousness reigns above them all—that of the dreamer; it knows no secrets, no incongruities, no scruples, no law."

The texture of *To Damascus* is solid compared with that of *The Dream Play*. The

story of the descent of the Daughter of Indra into matter, of human life as typified by The Glazier, The Officer, The Lawyer, The Bill-poster and The Poet, is told without any dramatic sequence, such as is required by the theatre of to-day. It is a play written for a stage not yet built, to be performed by some diaphanous visitants from the astral world. Strindberg calls *The Dream Play* a Buddhistic and proto-Christian drama. It is more than that: it is pre-cosmic.

The paradoxical versatility of a man who holds all the keys of successful drama in his hands, and yet sacrifices the theatre to the transcendentalism of his ideas, is not easily explained. Strindberg told Dr. John Landquist, now editor of the posthumous edition of his collected works, that he really found it difficult to write modern plays, and that he loved pomp and circumstance in drama.* That love is displayed in the sumptuous repast introduced into the second part of *To Damascus*, at once coarsely barbaric and uncomfortably ethereal, a strange combination of the Banquet of Life and the Swedish *hors-d'œuvre* table. And yet, this is the man who wrote the Chamber Plays: *Storm, The*

* *Idun*, May, 1912.

Burned Lot, The Pelican, The Black Glove and *The Spook Sonata* (1907), in which the figures move, physical, yet free from the three dimensions, impersonated ideas, brain-spectres who walk the boards with unsteady feet. This is the man who wrote the preface to *Lady Julie,* who sought the realisation of his theatrical ideal in the one-act play with two or three characters, and who later came to write *Gustavus Adolphus* with fifty-four characters, *Midsummer* with thirty-two characters; who created twenty-four characters for *Gustavus Vasa,* and twenty for *Eric XIV* and *The Saga of the Folkungs* respectively, and whose dramatic lavishness necessitated a succession of five-act dramas. It seems strange that the author of saga plays, like *The Journey of Lucky Peter,* and *The Keys of Heaven,* with its parodied Sancho Panzaisms, should have composed *The Dance of Death;* that the conscience-stricken visions of *To Damascus* should be followed by *The Slippers of Abu Casem.* This ingenious "toy for children" Strindberg dedicated to his youngest daughter, the little Anne-Marie, on her sixth birthday.

The two great Norwegian dramatists presented an orderly development in the choice

of dramatic form, which makes the study of their art an exercise in the logic of temperament. The natural romanticism of Ibsen's early plays passed into the classical art of *Ghosts*. The intellectual modernism of the later Ibsen was the ripeness anticipated by every shrewd observer of the course of his mind. The art of Ibsen is complex, yet simple. Born out of the depths of his love of truth and his love of beauty, it arose, well-formed, palpable, a thing for all the world to see and hear, an indictment of the gigantic social fraud to which all must ultimately listen. It is essentially exoteric. So is the art of the rival and minor playwright, Björnson, who has given the world its most perfect dramatised sermons. Strindberg's art is incalculable, subtle, the caprice of a spirit that cannot exhaust itself: esoteric because it is ever rooted in the unconscious. His plays may be read and seen by the many, but at present they will be understood only by the few.

In versatility of dramatic form Hauptmann stands nearest Strindberg. He has almost as many strings to his harp as the Swede—he has written naturalistic plays and fairy drama, social plays and mystical drama,

farce, comedy, romance and realism. Both dramatists are impelled by pity for human suffering, but the pity that guides Hauptmann, and which is typified by *The Weavers*, is an elemental, earthbound pity, concerned with food and poverty, lack of shelter and work. Strindberg's pity is transcendentalised; it hovers round the greater mysteries of existence itself, seeks to extract the human spirit from the curse of illusions. Hence the absence of finality in his writings. No book gives the impression of being quite finished; they all transmit the ache for a new point of view. Whilst Maeterlinck has evolved a philosophy of spiritualised tranquillity, and administers a soothing narcotic for the Soul Rampant in the twilight of his charmed castles, Strindberg walks on, acutely conscious of the thorns upon which he treads. Whilst Björnson, satisfied, proclaims his ideal of physical purity, and throws down *A Gauntlet* at vice, Strindberg is haunted by the ideal of the human soul's unattainable purity from dross. Whilst Bernard Shaw cuts the world's perplexities with a joke, a flashing paradoxical joke, Strindberg raises his hands in threatening condemnation at the Godhead Himself. In Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's

Elën, Samuel says to Goetze: "Science will not suffice. Sooner or later you will end by coming to your knees." *Goetze:* "Before what?" *Samuel:* "Before the Darkness." Strindberg was brought to his knees by the Darkness, but he rose with the dawn that followed.

During the thirteen years that passed between the quiet celebration of Strindberg's fiftieth birthday, and the national festivities with which the Swedish people acclaimed him on January 22nd, 1912, his countrymen were gradually made aware of his greatness. Men of all parties fearlessly proclaimed his genius over the open grave, though some would never have ventured to do so if they had not felt quite sure that he could not prepare any further shocks of surprise.

It is impossible to present a study of the experiences which caused the corrosive bitterness in Strindberg's attacks on everything and everybody, without reference to the unjust and Pharisaical criticism to which he had to submit. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that it was difficult to live with Strindberg. The Swedes had to live with him, and the household of those who set themselves up to guard the propriety and integrity of

literary art was day by day threatened by his revolutionary ideas, his personal attacks on spotless individuals, his coarse-grained descriptions of indescribable things. We must therefore extend sympathy to his detractors as well as to him. There is, besides, a reversionary power in the mere passage of time which calls for special tolerance. The reviewers of the *Athenæum* and *Blackwood's Magazine*, who suggested that Ruskin's *Modern Painters* had emanated from Bedlam, are more entitled to our sympathy than the object of their criticism.

The Swedes have a peculiar fear of praising that which is their own. They labour under a feeling that such praise is egotistical, blustering and discourteous to others. In Swedish peasant homes the housewife does honour to her guests by loud depreciation of the contents of her house and its offerings, no matter how well-appointed the home may be. The trait persists in the judgment of cultured people on national qualities, art and literature. It is certainly graceful, and makes the Swede an excellent companion, a polite and generous appreciator of the talents of others. But it is inimical to the toleration of a forceful and self-confident personality within one's own

Photo by Sandels, Stockholm

STRINDBERG IN HIS STUDY, 1911

THE STRINDBERG-THEATRE IN STOCKHOLM

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family or nation, and favourable to the mediocritisation of boisterous originality. If Strindberg had been an Italian or a Spaniard he would in all probability have been the recipient of the Nobel Prize during his lifetime, in addition to posthumous honours.

In the Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy (of Literature), the late Dr. C. D. af Wirsén, Strindberg had a persistent enemy. Wirsén acted as Secretary to the Academy from 1884 to his death in 1912, and exercised considerable influence over the selection of recipients of the Nobel Prize in literature which is awarded by the Swedish Academy. To Wirsén who wrote idyllic and elegiac poetry, and who held everything that is old in reverence, Strindberg was incomprehensible. By his attacks on Strindberg, and also by his derisive criticism of another free-thinking Swedish writer, Ellen Key,* Wirsén shows a close resemblance to the type of foolish biographer for which Mr. A. C. Benson has found an admirable name: *the eagle-eating monkey*. There is a pseudo-aristocracy of mind which receives not truth in its house, unless she be arrayed in garments of classical

* Ellen Key's *Lifsåskådning och Verksamhet som Författarinna.* En undersökning af C. D. af Wirsén.

cut, and has not journeyed along the highways of humankind. Wirsén looked upon Strindberg as a parvenu of intelligence, just as certain academicians regarded Spencer as a parvenu of science. Wirsén's diligent criticisms of Strindberg range over twenty years,* and may in some measure explain Strindberg's delusions of persecution. In 1882 Wirsén gave qualified praise to *Master Olof*, and took the opportunity of reminding his readers that *The Red Room* was pervaded by "evil but empty wit." His virtuous indignation over "the blasphemous effusions" and "ridiculous vanity" of Strindberg's autobiography was sustained by the discovery that it contained much boastfulness, but no solid thought, and he searched in vain for any proof that the unlucky author was—what he might have been—a noble, though eccentric personality. He received *The Father* with feelings of pity for he could see nothing in it, but the impotence of a diseased imagination and a mixture of coarseness and paradoxicality. When *Comrades* was published Wirsén expressed his astonishment that such a play had found a publisher. He dismissed *The Stronger*, as giving "no evidence of

* *Kritiker*, af C. D. af Wirsén.

strength in the composition. Anything weaker has seldom been put together." He could find no artistic merit in *At the Edge of the Sea.* In 1897 he condemned *The Link* and *Playing with Fire* by declaring that both were equally "unpleasant and painful." He naturally found Strindberg's verses bad, and shuddered over their invectives of hatred and revenge. When *Inferno* was published he derived comfort from announcing that Strindberg's intellect "has now gone to pieces," but recorded mournfully that the pen that wrote *Legends* was as evil as ever. Wirsén did not believe in Strindberg's delusions; he claimed to see through them: they were nothing but coquetry with the public, sensational advertisement. *To Damascus* was to him "a horrid and depressing work—excessively loathsome." The most unjust of all Wirsén's accusations against Strindberg is, perhaps, that of dulness. The autopsychological quest for truth in Strindberg's writings bored Wirsén, and he thought others must be bored too. Between the chastisements Wirsén exhibited a truly Christian forbearance, and graced a corner of his literary column by beseeching Strindberg and his followers to return to the path of goodness. He assured the sinners that their

return to sounder ideas and purer production would be met with a warm welcome and undisguised joy in spite of the past.

But the prodigal son of Swedish literature did not return to the house of the Academy. He had been well castigated for his brilliant satire on that somnolent institution in *The New Kingdom*, but he continued to mock "the Gods of Time" until the end of his days. In 1910 he took the Academy to task for its admiration of Baron Klinkowström, a poetaster, whose puerile and pompous verses were free from any menace to the existing order of things.

It is true that Wirsén did not represent the whole of literary criticism in Sweden. It is also true that Strindberg always had a small circle of faithful followers who admired him, believed in him—and copied him. But during the many years when Strindberg was absent from Sweden a new school of literature was formed which was equally out of touch with his early realism and his late mysticism. Oscar Levertin, Werner von Heidenstam, Gustaf af Geijerstam and Selma Lagerlöf are the most prominent names of modern Swedish literature. Geijerstam's *Erik Grane* is an offshoot of early Strind-

bergism, and Heidenstam's brilliant stories of the soldiers of Charles XII, *Karolinerna*, are not without traces of the influence of Strindberg's *Swedish Destinies and Adventures*. But Strindberg was always too sceptical to stake his fortune on any particular breed of Pegasus. In his last two "terrible" novels, *The Gothic Rooms* (1904) and *Black Flags* (1907), he again delivered himself of violent and personal attacks upon society in general and the priests of literature and art in particular, thereby widening the gulf that lay between him and them.

The many attacks made upon Strindberg in Sweden had one practical effect which caused him bitter disappointment. Theatrical managers fought shy of his plays. Fourteen years passed between the successful production of *The Father* in Paris and its performance in Stockholm. *Lady Julie* had to wait eighteen years before she was allowed to appear in Stockholm. In 1906 the play had a run of several weeks at "Folkteatern," in Stockholm, a playhouse for the working classes, where the aristocratic lady's downfall was appreciated in a crude, but wholehearted manner.

Whilst the theatrical managers of Sweden were hesitating as to the expediency of allow-

ing Strindberg to overshadow the stage, Herr Lauthenburg gave popular performances at the "Residenz Theater" in Berlin of *Creditors*, *Playing with Fire* and *Facing Death*. Together with Hauptmann and Ibsen, Strindberg now won theatrical triumphs all over Germany.

The indifference shown in Sweden towards the performance of Strindberg's plays led him to plan a Strindberg-Theatre to be run on lines similar to those of the Théâtre Maeterlinck. After many difficulties the plan was at last realised in the autumn of 1907, when *The Intimate Theatre* began its stormy career with *The Pelican*, *The Burned Lot*, *Storm*, and the Hoffmanesque and elliptic *Spook Sonata*. These plays were promptly attacked by critics who made little attempt to understand them.

The efforts made in certain quarters to silence Strindberg could not suppress the rising wave of admiration. When once the public had been brought in touch with him, the anathema of the powerful literary coterie was useless. In 1901 Herr Albert Ranft had courageously staged *Gustavus Vasa* and *Eric XIV* at "Svenska Teatern" in Stockholm. They became theatrical successes. "Dramatiska Teatern" followed suit with *Charles XII*, *Easter* and *There are Crimes and Crimes*.

A young Norwegian actress, Harriet Bosse, played the part of Eleonora in *Easter* with so much charm that she fascinated both audience and author. She became a favourite actress and—Strindberg's third wife. Several of Strindberg's great historical plays were performed before the opening of his own Intimate Theatre. Though the change in public opinion was making itself felt, Strindberg could not but resent the tardy recognition of his works.

He was out of touch with the literary men of his own country. To them he appeared as an outlander, and yet he was, withal, so intensely Swedish. He sought in vain to denationalise himself. He was not Swedish with the passionate, reverential love with which Dostoevsky was Russian. Strindberg was Swedish in spite of his efforts to the contrary ; his country was in his blood and bones. When Herr A. Babillotte,* a German writer, says of Strindberg : " He is without roots . . . though a Swede, he is certainly not Swedish," he shows scant understanding of one of the mainsprings in Strindberg's character and production. The statement is on a par with his contemptuous dismissal of Strindberg's

* *August Strindberg. Das Hohe Lied seines Lebens,* von Arthur Babillotte.

historical dramas.* These plays drew nourishment from his love of his country, and derived actuality from his identity with Sweden. His heart hankered after Sweden, and drove him home when pride would have kept him away. In one of his first poems, entitled *In Paris*, he sang wittily of his incorrigible heart's longing for Sweden, despite the allurements of Montmartre. He felt lonely in Switzerland because he had not spoken to a countryman for three months.

The difficulty in tracing Strindberg's literary ancestry in Sweden is responsible for attempts to find his roots elsewhere. Thus Laura Marholm elaborates a fantastic theory, according to which the mixture of genius and nomadic barbarism in Strindberg is to be explained by his "Mongolian blood." The union of mystic melancholy and exuberant sensuousness in Strindberg caused close, but futile comparisons to be made between him and E. J. Stagnelius, a Swedish poet of the romantic school who died in 1823. But a greater number of points of contact could be established between Strindberg and the "wizard" of Swedish literature, K. J. L.

* "Ich halte Strindberg's historische Dramen für das Schwächste was er je geschrieben."

Almqvist, who lived in open revolt against authority and convention of all kinds, and whose prolific writings showed a remarkable versatility of mind. Almqvist was a realist and symbolist who loved to throw out paradoxical *bons-mots* on current morals with a generous hand. "Two things are white," he said, ". . . innocence and arsenic." The a-moral note of his writings and the general bizarrerie of his metaphors may show a certain likeness to Strindberg, but it vanishes upon closer comparison. Almqvist was not a dramatist.

Though without direct literary parentage in Sweden, Strindberg is the most typical representative of his country's temperament and spiritual struggles. His genius is indigenous in spite of its universality. His is the race-consciousness which is enriched by contact with other races, but which never loses its distinct quality.

He writes an idiomatic Swedish which, in a sense, is not reproducible in another language. His sentences, whether in the dialogue of a drama, or in the story of a novel, are wrought with a nervous force which is untranslatable. His phrases seem to be innervated, warm-blooded entities, and support the theory that the sentence preceded

the word in the evolution of speech. He is often ungrammatical; each sentence is a living whole which cannot be divided. Analyse him with syntax and dictionary, and you will find "mistakes" and startling neology. The meaning will sometimes be obscure. But read him as you would listen to a piece of music with your ear to the harmonics, and you will find a consummate artist in words. Laura Marholm says that the sound of Strindberg is like bell metal in Swedish, whilst it resembles tin in German. There is much truth in the statement. Even the vigorous and cogent translations into German by Herr Emil Schering cannot retain the soul and magic of Strindberg's style. Translated from German into English he is unrecognisable. The difficulty of fusing his meaning and style in a new form is also apparent in the direct translations into English which have been made. Some of his plays have been sympathetically done into English by Herr Edwin Björkman. Mr. Björkman quotes from an article in *The Drama*, in which the belief is expressed that Strindberg's prose will be rendered better in "American" than in English. Mr. Björkman's translations are certainly American rather than English. The

question whether this is an advantage to the style and beauty of the translation is a matter of taste which it would be invidious to discuss.

Strindberg never strove to build up a style, like Stevenson who "played the sedulous ape" to Lamb, Wordsworth and Baudelaire. He knew nothing of the terrible torture of style which made Flaubert's literary labours a martyrdom. Ideas haunted Strindberg as they haunted Jules de Goncourt, but he never experienced the slavery to literary form in which the Goncourts lived. He did not live in order to write; he wrote in order to live.

In an article of reminiscences by Madame Hélène Welinder,* who spent the summer of 1884 with Strindberg and his family at Chexbres in Switzerland, there is a vivid account of Strindberg's manner of writing. He wrote with feverish restlessness, and tried to overcome sleeplessness with large doses of bromide. She asked him if rest would not be better than bromide. Strindberg put his hand to his forehead as if in pain, and replied with a tone of despair: "I cannot rest, however much I should like to. I must write for bread in order to maintain wife and children, and, even apart from this, I cannot

* *Ord och Bild*, No. IX, 1912.

stop. Whether I travel by train, or do anything else, my brain works incessantly, it grinds and grinds like a mill, and I cannot make it stop. I get no peace before I see my thoughts on paper, and then something new begins immediately, and there is the same misery. I write and write, and do not even read through what I have written."

This rapidity of composition was probably to some extent responsible for the frequent repetitions of the same word within a short paragraph, the careless tautology of ideas, situations and episodes in his books. Many instances of such episode-repetition could be given. Thus *Comrades* and *Charles XII* contain similar phrases about the woman clipping the man's hair of strength, whilst his head rests in her lap. *The Dream Play* has several scenes which are "the doubles" of those related in *Fairhaven and Foulstrand*. A certain event connected with the tearing up of *The Swiss Family Robinson* serves the author's psychological purposes both in *To Damascus* and in *The Dream Play*. In *The Father* Laura secretly abstracts the contents of her husband's letter-bag, and in *To Damascus* "The Lady" is guilty of the same offence. Both in *Fairhaven and Foulstrand* and in *To*

Damascus the woman promises not to read a certain book by the man which deals with his first marriage. She breaks the promise, and the disastrous effect is related with emphasis in both books. In *The Dance of Death* the remorseless Captain calmly refers to his attempt to drown his wife by pushing her into the water; the incident is more fully worked out in *Fairhaven and Foulstrand*, and is the theme of a story in *Fisher Folk*. Such repetitions cannot be attributed to poverty of imagination; they are the outcome of a too retentive emotional memory and an insistent need of expression, immediate expression.

It is curious to note that in spite of the richness and purity of his Swedish, in which the living tongue of the people is heard as never heretofore, there is not infrequently an admixture of foreign words and expressions. That his early verse-play *In Rome* should contain rhymes on "jouissance" and "connaissance," coupled with Swedish words, and that some of his early poems were adorned in the same manner is not surprising. But when Göran Persson in *Eric XIV* lightly throws out a hybrid drawing-room phrase: "*Tant mieux* for my enemies!" a jarring

note is introduced which is difficult to explain in a dialogue, otherwise so carefully balanced. The habit of using root-words from many languages, to which he gave Swedish shape, grew upon Strindberg in later years. In the plays his characters suddenly begin to spout Latin and Greek, like the philosophic beggar in *To Damascus* and the sergeant-major in *Gustavus Adolphus*. Such dramatic exercises in the classics may have had a good and sufficient reason. The use of words of foreign extraction was no doubt fostered by his familiarity with the literature of many countries, and by the limitations of each language. To this may be added his growing interest in philological research. A short time before his death he was keenly at work on the etymology of Finnish, Hebrew and Greek.

Uddgren's account of Strindberg's manner of working in 1907 shows that the fever had not left him. "When I have finished my work for the day," Strindberg said, "I always note on a piece of paper what I shall begin with the next day. The whole long afternoon and evening I collect material for next day's work. During my morning walk my thoughts are further condensed, and

when I return from my wanderings I am charged like an electric machine. I put on a dry vest, for after my walk I am always very hot, and then I sit down at my writing-table. As soon as I have paper and pen ready it bursts out. The words literally tumble over me, and the pen works under high pressure in order to get everything down on paper. When I have written for a while I have a feeling that I am floating in space. Then it is as if a higher will than my own made the pen glide over the paper, guide it to write down words which seem to me entirely inspired."

The same ecstasy of writing is shown in *Alone*, where he says of his life at the writing-table: "I live, and I live the manifold lives of all the human beings I describe, happy with those who are happy, evil with the evil ones, good with the good; I creep out of my own personality, and speak out of the mouths of children, of women, of old men; I am king and beggar, I have worldly power, I am the tyrant and the most despised of all, the oppressed hater of the tyrant; I hold all opinions and profess all religions; I live in all times and have myself ceased to be. This is a state which brings indescribable happiness."

These words remind us of Flaubert who felt "in the space of a minute a million thoughts, images and combinations of all kinds, throwing themselves into my brain at once as it were the lighted squibs of fireworks,"* and recall the plastic and yearning girl-soul of Marie Bashkirtseff who, when walking in Rome, exclaimed: "I want to be Cæsar, Augustus, Marcus Aurelius, Caracalla, the Devil, the Pope," and who adds: "I love to weep, I love to be in despair. I love to be grieved and sad . . . and I love life in spite of everything."

Amiel, remembering a night when he lay stretched full length on the sandy shore of the North Sea, cries: "Will they ever return to me, those grandiose, immortal, cosmogonic dreams, in which one seems to carry the world in one's breast, to touch the stars, to possess the infinite?"† Amiel dreamt, Strindberg created; Amiel found literary exultation in dreamy contemplation of the universe, Strindberg in the spiral revolutions of humanity.

But sometimes the joy of literary creation gave way to profound self-disgust. "What an occupation," he writes in *The Quarantine*

* *Correspondance.* † *Amiel's Journal.*

HARRIET BOSSE
Strindberg's third wife as Biskra in *Samum*
1902

ANNE-MARIE BOSSE-STRINDBERG
Strindberg's only child in his third marriage
Born 1902

UNIV. OF WICH.

*Master's Tales,** " to sit and flay one's fellow-humans, offer the skins for sale, and expect people to buy them. It is like the famished hunter who cuts off his dog's tail, eats the meat himself, and gives the bones to the dog, the dog's own bones. To go about spying out people's secrets, exposing the birthmark of one's best friend, using one's wife as a vivisection rabbit, storming like a Croat, cutting down, violating, burning and selling. The devil take it all."

Strindberg's style expands to fit his wild excursions into the world of ideas and his eccentricities of conception, such as the story of when he tried to catch dead " souls " with a bottle containing sugar of lead, on the Montparnasse cemetery,† or that of the madman's microscopical studies of the genesis of humanity in *At the Edge of the Sea.* His expressions and metaphors often bear the imprint of overwrought feeling, as when he speaks of the " blood-poisoning cares of the household," or when the impression produced by a visit to parents-in-law is that " of a serpent's hole into which Satan had enticed him." When he describes poor people asleep

* *Fairhaven and Foulstrand.*
† *Fables and Other Stories.*

at night in a railway carriage, as presenting the appearance of corpses on a battlefield and scattered human limbs, we cannot but congratulate ourselves on the dulness of our imagination.

Strindberg's "wildness" has been falsely attributed to the influence of alcohol. His use of absinthe, and his habit of heaping all sins upon himself—including that of drunkenness—account for the fable that he was incapable of writing without the aid of alcoholic excesses. He cannot even be placed in the long list of literary and artistic "drunkards"—including the names of Burns, Byron, Charles Lamb, Addison, Musset, Hoffmann, Poe and Baudelaire—to whom alcohol was a means of attaining to inspiration. Strindberg did not seek cortical excitation. He sought oblivion. In *The Great Highway*, "The Hunter" says to "The Wanderer" (Strindberg): "Mr. Incognito, why do you drink so much?" *The Wanderer:* "Because I am always lying on the operating-table, and have to chloroform myself."

He was not a man who suffered from chronic congestion of the head in consequence of indifference to all hygienic laws. Ever since the early days when he used to throw

himself headlong into the open sea from a rock, he was devoted to cold-water ablutions. His morning exercise, which sometimes was taken so vehemently as to tire him out completely, was part of the routine of daily life. In his home-life he was of methodical, orderly habits; he detested alike uncleanliness and untidiness—in fact, precisely the opposite of what some people have imagined him to be.

The roots of his "wildness" cannot be found in the fumes of alcohol. There was a strain of the publicist and the agitator in Strindberg which found but an insufficient outlet. His craving for social reform was not satisfied by corresponding activity. He suffered from too much happening within him, and too little without. His stored-up energy caused a series of eruptions. Strindberg was an orator afflicted with dumbness. His faults of style are those of the typical orator. The splendour and vigour of his phrasing often hide blunders of logic and hasty conclusions. If Strindberg had met audiences face to face, like Björnson, and been in actual touch with the people, his tongue would have lost its sting. Björnson's pulpit manner would have fitted Strindberg badly, but it would have protected him against himself.

But Strindberg could not be a public speaker. Though he was essentially a "Confessor" on paper of the race of St. Augustine and Chateaubriand, he dreaded the personal jostling and exhibition which are inseparable from political life. Loneliness was necessary to him. The emanations, opinions and habits of others were apt to oppress him, if brought too closely within his own circle. In Paris he fled from his friendship with Jonas Lie; in *Inferno* he shows this dread of paying the taxes of friendship. He felt the identity of other people pressing on him in much the same way as Keats did. In company he did not like to be contradicted. Though a genial and generous host, he could turn friends out of his house if they proved themselves possessed of too great pugnacity of argument. "I have never hated human beings, rather the reverse," he says, "but ever since I was born I fear them."

This fear of an alien invasion of the soul, of losing himself in another, made him flee again and again from the prison-house of love. In all his books the attraction between man and woman is a duel between love and hatred. Sexual love is never spiritualised; it drags man into the illusions of Māyā, it robs

him of strength of purpose, of intellectual freedom. Hence Strindberg's men are ever struggling to get out of the clutches of woman. When the ties are too strong to be broken, when passion obscures reason, hatred is born. Anatole France calls himself "a philosophical monk." The monk is always by Strindberg's side, pointing out the degradation of carnal love, urging him to seek liberation at all costs. But he is not yet ready. He wants to go, and he wants to stay. And all his couples, autobiographical and purely imaginative, burn in the fires of love-hatred. "I love her," he writes in *Inferno*, "and she loves me, and we hate each other with a wild hatred, born of love, which is intensified by the great distance." In *Fairhaven and Foulstrand* the lover says: "At bottom we hate each other, because we love each other. We are afraid of losing our personalities through the assimilating power of love, and therefore we must break away sometimes so as to feel that I am not you. . . ."

After some time love always becomes irksome to Strindberg. He longs for male companionship. He experiences a sense of relief when he is free from the woman, from the consciousness of always being watched. His

voice resumes its manly tones, his chest expands. This trait subsists in his stories; it makes marital happiness impossible.

He can describe the marriage of souls with exquisite delicacy, the first hours of newborn tenderness, the maiden's innocence, the youth's wonder at the miracle which is taking place within his heart, the chaste abandonment of reserve before the unifying power of love. But when once love has descended from Heaven to Earth, Strindberg does not leave the lovers in peace. From earth's paradise they are driven to hell; they must hate each other, torment each other, devour each other's substance with the cruelty of vampires. Even the first kiss is fraught with untold dangers. In *Midsummer*—a sunny play emphasising the worth of man and the dignity of work, remarkably free from distressing problems—this pathological trait is introduced. Julius, a healthy young gardener, kisses Louise, his sweetheart, on the mouth, and the demoniacal depths of human nature are immediately revealed to both. Julius begins to understand the meaning of hatred, and gives utterance to startling thoughts. Louise no longer recognises his voice. "Why did you kiss me?" says Julius, "we ought

AUGUST STRINDBERG

BUST BY MAX LEVI, 1893

BUST BY AGNES KJELLBERG-FRUMERIE, 1896

never to have done that." "What happened?" says Louise. "I have just read in a book," answers Julius, "that when two innocent bodies, carbon and nitrogen, unite a dreadful poison is formed. The poison has been born on our lips, and hatred has been born out of our innocent love."

Shakespeare married a shrew. She served as an excellent model for his portraits of angry women. Led by a malignant fate Strindberg married three women who had interests outside the home. He loved *the ideal* of the womanly woman, the mother who lives for home and children. He came to detest the intellectual woman; she was to him the man-woman, a danger to the race, the enemy of man who steals his qualities because she is bent on his destruction.

In *The Confession of a Fool* his love for his first wife suffers at an early stage through the necessary introduction of business into the divorce arrangements. "Where is the charm of a woman who is always worn out with contention, whose conversation bristles with legal terms?" he asks plaintively. In *Fairhaven and Foulstrand* the second story of the Quarantine Master shows the same sad development: ". . . But this evening he

found her ugly, carelessly dressed, with ink on her fingers, and her conversation was so business-like that she appeared to him in a detestable light." "A lady," he says in one of his essays on the art of the theatre, "must never be snappish or grumpy, even if her part is one of opposition. A lady should always be graceful, even in moments of anger."

Already as a youth he found it difficult to talk sense to girls. He denied that friendship could exist between the two sexes. The presence of emancipated and "free" women was sufficient completely to disorganise his work and temper. He told Uddgren that he did not feel happy in Switzerland, because he found women enjoying the same freedom as men in marriage. "I experienced a sense of peace when I came to Bavaria where the men are the rulers in marriage, and the women are obedient and faithful. The mere fact of returning to these old-fashioned, patriarchal conditions was sufficient to restore my literary powers which, during the last time in Switzerland, had been in abeyance."

In an essay entitled *Woman-Hatred and Woman-Worship*, published in 1897, Strindberg wrote: "As I have the reputation of being a woman-hater, and people amuse

themselves by calling me one, I am forced to ask myself if I really am one. On looking back at my past life I discover that, ever since I became man, I have always lived in regular relations with women, and that their presence has aroused pleasant feelings in me, in so far as they have remained women towards me. But when they have behaved as the rivals of man, neglected their beauty and lost their charm, I have detested them by dint of a natural and sound instinct, for in them I sensed something of man, and an element of my own sex which I detest from the bottom of my heart. . . . Consequently, as I have been married twice and had five children, it is not very likely that I should be a woman-hater."

" The most beautiful thing I know," says The Stranger to The Lady in *To Damascus*, " is a woman bent over her needlework or her child." And The Lady crochets. The good women in his plays are all fitted for " the most beautiful thing ": Gunlöd in *The Outlaw*, Margaretha in *The Secret of the Guild*, Karin in *Eric XIV*.

The following passage throws light, not only on Strindberg's attitude towards women, but on the attitude of women towards him : " To

return to woman was to me to come back to nature, and in a corner of my soul I made myself unconscious, instinctive, a child, and thus renewed my power to think, act and fight. . . I have always worshipped women, these enchanting, criminal minxes whose worst crimes are not registered in criminal statistics. But I have had sufficiently bad—or good—taste to tell them the truth, and they have revenged themselves by calling me woman-hater. Just think, if these priestesses of revenge knew how many successes with the fair sex their revenge has brought me! Inquisitiveness, the original sin of Eve, drew the little *ingénues* to the monster, and the monster put no obstacles in the way for even the most inquisitive to satisfy their curiosity . . . many thanks, my charming enemies."

It is little wonder that a man so constituted should be appalled at the prospect of the New Woman with her independence, her clubs, her cigarettes, her politics, her sport. Monsieur Casimir Dudevant, the husband of George Sand, who was "just an ordinary man" was at first puzzled by his wife's extraordinary qualities, and then came to the conclusion that she was "idiotic." Poor Monsieur Dudevant! He was the forerunner of a long

row of perplexed husbands, injured in their sense of the fitness of things. Strindberg merely made himself a spokesman for what the majority of masculine men feel in regard to intellectual women, even though they may not be capable of expressing it. Since he abandoned his early championship of woman's suffrage, he came to utter much bad and ill-tempered abuse of woman. Some of the things which he said of "lazy, stingy and cowardly woman," of her mental and physical inferiority to man, might well be included in Flaubert's *Dossier de la Sottise Humaine*. His arguments in favour of the theory that woman is an intermediary biological form, whose development has been arrested somewhere between man and youth, are interesting but unconvincing. The evidence he offers in support of his views on the general incapacity of woman—an incapacity which ranges from the handling of musical instruments to making coffee—bears the imprint of petulance rather than research. Sometimes there is a cross and quarrelsome tone in these utterances which reflects personal irritation, something of Alfred de Musset's words in *Nuit d'Octobre*:

> Honte à toi, qui la première
> M'a appris la trahison . . .!

But, after all, there is not much difference between the reasons against woman's political emancipation put forward by Strindberg, and those to which Mrs. Humphry Ward clings. And there is a close affinity between the psychological and physiological arguments against woman's suffrage, advanced in leading articles in *The Times*, and those on which Strindberg based his objections to giving women greater freedom. The dread of the subjection of man, of a general feminisation of the world, and its effects on social life and politics, is the common ground of opposition.*

Some people have found an appropriate analogy in the fact that Strindberg "hated," not only women, but dogs. The hatred of dogs pervades his books, and has a note of the same bitter unreasonableness as his strictures on women. His first wife had a King Charles," a blear-eyed little monster," which apparently received more loving attention than her husband. She even "prayed for dogs, fowls and rabbits," whilst, presumably, she did not pray for him. This was intolerable, and henceforth the dog be-

* The reader is referred to the following leading articles: *Insurgent Hysteria* (March 16th, 1912), *The Subjection of Man* (July 31st, 1912), and *Militant Suffragism* (September 24th, 1912).

came Strindberg's symbol of the worthless recipients of the good things of this world, of sneaking cupboard-love and uncleanliness. He has surpassed the Bible in contemptuous references to the dog.

From this hatred the rest of the animal world was exempt. He cautions the angler against inflicting unnecessary suffering on the worm. He feeds the birds on his window-sill and the bear in the Zoo. He tells a story of a certain island where all the people were abominable drunkards, and where the only eyes which could still reflect intelligence and the blue sky were those of animals. He is not in sympathy with the aimless destruction of life. "Why must one always have a gun when one sees an innocent creature in the forest?" he asks, and adds: "There are other occasions in life when a gun would be of better use." In *The Crown Bride* the life of an ant is spared, and the mystic "White Child" proclaims the love that is greatest of all, "love for every living thing, great and small."

Strindberg's life in Stockholm during the last years of his great dramatic production flowed in a calm stream, the surface of which showed no signs of the storms within. He

lived the life of a literary hermit, wrapped up in his studies and his art. He took his morning walks when the greater part of Stockholm was still asleep, and received only a few privileged friends in his home. Solitude had become his best friend. In the morning he made his own coffee, and partook of a light repast before going out. As a rule he lived frugally, and his little home was arranged with the greatest simplicity. "When I get out of bed the morning after a sober evening and a restful night, life itself is a distinct enjoyment. It is like rising from the dead," he says in *Alone*.

Poverty, the faithful companion of his youth, clung to him to the end. Even during the last years he was often in monetary difficulties; in his attacks upon the powers of the day he had no thought of what the morrow would bring to him. He had again and again to pay the penalty of speaking unpopular truths. And when money came his way he did not love it well enough to make it stay with him. He gave with a lavish, careless hand, with a heart ever warm and bleeding for those who had less than he. When, on his last birthday, a purse containing 50,000 kronor had been presented to him, as a token

of the people's love and admiration, he gave away large sums to the cause of peace, to the poor. When, at last, a great publisher bought the rights of all his published works in Sweden for some £11,000, the affluence came too late—for him.

In 1901 he married Harriet Bosse who had been the sympathetic interpreter on the stage of the women in some of his plays. The marriage was amicably dissolved in 1904. During his third marriage he wrote *The Dance of Death* and *Swanwhite*, and published a volume of poems, in which his lyrical powers were perfected through greater sensitiveness and restraint. Among these poems there is one, strange and beautiful, spiritual and earthly, in which he sings of the glory of the form of woman—the theme of artists and lovers since the beginning of time—but here treated in a new manner. In her he sees the motion of stars and planets, the lines of sphere, parabola and ellipse. He sees the infinite possibilities of the Cosmic procession, of the creative, ever-moving force, the highest and the lowest, in the symbol of the eternally feminine.

The " music of the spheres " has been captured in this little poem. It is strange how often one is constrained to use musical

metaphors in describing Strindberg's style. There is always music in his language. He was conscious of this himself, for in his last plays he always chose music to fit the mood of his dramatic movement. Thus the spiritual peace of *Easter*, the change from fear of fate to certainty of God's presence, is accompanied by Haydn's *Sieben Worte des Erlösers*, the sinful thoughts of Maurice and Henriette in *There are Crimes and Crimes* are followed by the finale of Beethoven's Sonata in D minor. *The Dream Play* is interluded with Bach's Toccata con Fuga; the *Dance of Death* is trodden to the tune of the "Entry of the Boyars."

Over his piano there hung a death-mask of Beethoven. The final movement of the "Moonlight Sonata" was to him the highest interpretation of humanity's yearning for deliverance. Music brought him peace. It gave him strength when words failed—even during the last days when he sat at his piano, improvising variations on the Death hymn of the Titanic. Strindberg's old friend Tor Aulin, the well-known Swedish composer, received a characteristic message from Strindberg's deathbed: "A last farewell from Saul to David."

STRINDBERG'S FUNERAL, MAY 19TH, 1912

Trades-Unions and Undergraduates in Procession

The little Anne-Marie Bosse-Strindberg, his daughter in the last marriage, was very dear to his heart. He had found her gifted with something of the second sight which was his own, and his great tenderness for children found response in her. Amongst his three children by the first marriage his daughter Greta, married to Dr. Henry von Philp in Stockholm, understood him best. She was an actress, and took the part of Kerstin in *The Crown Bride* during the national festivities in his honour in January, 1912. Happily he did not live to mourn over the tragic fate that overtook her. She was killed in a terrible railway accident which took place a few weeks after her father's death.

The illness which was to end his life had long been battling with his wonderful vitality. He caught cold during the Christmas of 1911, when he went to pay a visit to his daughter Greta. Pneumonia supervened and laid him low for some time. He regained strength and once again put on his warrior's armour. Of this illness he gave an account in *Berliner Tageblatt* of February 4th, 1912. After describing an etymological challenge which he had sent to three Finnish friends he writes:

"The challenge had hardly been accepted before I fell ill; I first noticed it on the morning of Christmas Day, when I was so tired, so tired, that I would neither get up, nor drink my coffee. I had no pains, but experienced a great calm and an indifference towards the outer world, and felt as if I had at last found peace. Usually I get up punctually at seven, take a walk, and hurry home, driven by an irresistible longing for work. Now this restlessness had left me; I felt my life-work was completed. I had said all I wished to say, and my unprinted manuscripts were put away in perfect order in boxes."

But the recovery was apparent only. The real trouble was cancer of the stomach. An operation was performed, but could not check the advance of the disease.

On January 22nd, 1912, the whole Swedish nation celebrated his sixty-third birthday. It was nearly too late. The breath of death was already upon him as he stood on his balcony, waving his hand to the torchlight procession which passed his house, bending his head before the deafening cheers which rose from the multitudes, from whose lips the cry for August Strindberg rose in tones of jubilant hero-worship. As he stood there,

raised above the bands and banners of the festive acclamation, it may be that the memories of past mistakes, past humiliation, and past struggle for goodness, rose within that mighty brow, and kept pace with the steps of the marching crowd below. For he knew, as few have known, the comedy and the tragedy of life.

That night the theatres of Stockholm vied with each other in performing his plays. Laurel-wreathed busts and portraits of Strindberg were on view in the foyers and restaurants. The night came with public festivities in his honour, music and speeches of approbation.

But the dramatist remained at home in his Blue Tower with a few friends. The applause of the public touched his heart, but did not deceive him. He knew that the curtain was about to fall on his part in the perpetual performance in the Theatre of Life, and that new scenes were to follow, to be hissed and applauded until Time puts its last figure upon the stage.

LIST OF STRINDBERG'S CHIEF WRITINGS

A UNIFORM edition of Strindberg's collected works is in course of publication by Messrs. Albert Bonnier of Stockholm, who are the owners of the copyright of Strindberg's writings. The following list includes some unpublished works which will now be issued for the first time by Messrs. Bonnier.

In a preface to *The Author*, one of the autobiographical volumes, Strindberg gave a chronological list of his most important works, and added explanatory remarks. The appended notes embody some of Strindberg's views on his own writings:

The Freethinker	1869	Plays.
Hermione	1869	
In Rome	1870	
The Outlaw	1871	
Master Olof	1872	
The Year 'Forty-Eight	1881	

"In Rome," "The Outlaw," and "Hermione" are classified by Strindberg as "studies."

From Fjärdingen and Svartbäcken	1877	Stories.
The Red Room	1879	Novel.
From the Sea	1880	Stories.
Here and There	1880	
Old Stockholm	1880	

He and She . . . .

(To be published for the first time in the posthumous edition of Strindberg's Collected Works.)

The Secret of the Guild . .	1880	Plays.
Sir Bengt's Wife . . .	1882	
The Journey of Lucky Peter .	1883	
Studies in the History of Culture	1881	
The Swedish People . .	1881–82	History.
The New Kingdom . . .	1882	Satirical Sketches.

Swedish Destinies and Adventures (Two Volumes) . . 1883–92 Stories in Historical Setting.

Strindberg defines "The New Kingdom" as a criticism of "The Changeably Permanent."

Poems in Verse and Prose .	1883	Poems.
Somnambulistic Nights after Wakeful Days	1884	
Miscellanea (Likt och Olikt) .		Essays: Society under Review.
From Italy	1884	
Married (Two Volumes) .	1884–86	Stories.

Strindberg points out that the first volume of "Married" is a defence and glorification of marriage, of home, mother, and child, and that the second part is a criticism.

The Impoundage Journey .

An account of the prosecution following upon the publication of "Married." It will now be issued in book-form.

Real Utopias . . . . 1885 Stories.

Described by Strindberg as positive suggestions in the spirit of Saint-Simonism. REMORSE—*"The Peace Story"—is included in this collection.*

The Bondswoman's Son *Fermentation Time* *In the Red Room* *The Author*	1886–87	Autobiography.
The People of Hemsö	1887	Novels.
Fisherfolk	1888	

These novels represent the author's emancipation from the bondage of "problems"; Strindberg points out that they are simply descriptions of country life and scenery.

Sketches of Flowers and Animals	1888	
The Father	1887	Plays.
Lady Julie	1888	
Comrades	1888	
Creditors	1890	
Pariah	1890	
Samum	1890	
The Stronger	1890	
Facing Death	1893	
The First Warning	1893	
Debit and Credit	1893	
Mother-Love	1893	
Playing with Fire	1897	
The Link	1897	
Among French Peasants	1889	
Tschandala	1889	Stories.
The Island of Bliss	1890	
At the Edge of the Sea	1890	Novel.

Strindberg remarks that "At the Edge of the Sea" was influenced by Nietzsche, but "the individual succumbs in the struggle for absolute individualism."

Things Printed and Unprinted (Two Volumes)	1890–97	Essays.
The Associations of France and Sweden up to the Present Time	1891	

(To be published for the first time in Swedish.)

Fables	1890–97	
The Keys of Heaven . .	1892	Play.

Strindberg's remark: "Darkness, sorrow, despair, absolute scepticism."

The Confession of a Fool .	1893	Autobiographical Novel.

(A German edition was published in 1893; a French edition in 1894; it will now be published in Swedish.)

Jardin des plantes .	.	
Antibarbarus . .	.	1892–98 Essays.
Types and Prototypes	.	
Inferno	.	1897 Autobiography.
Legends	.	1898
To Damascus. I and II	.	1898 Plays.
,, III . .	.	1904
Advent	.	1899

"The great crisis at fifty," remarks Strindberg, "revolutions in my mental life, wanderings in the desert, devastation, Hells and Heavens of Swedenborg. Not influenced by Huysmans' "En Route," still less by Peladan, who was then unknown to the author . . . but based on personal experiences."

There are Crimes and Crimes .	1899	Plays.
The Saga of the Folkungs .	1899	
Gustavus Vasa . .	1899	
Eric XIV . . .	1899	
Gustavus Adolphus . .	1900	

"Light after darkness," writes Strindberg. "New production, with Faith, Hope, and Charity regained—and absolute certainty."

Midsummer	1901	Plays.
Easter	1901	
"The school of suffering."		
The Dance of Death. I and II	1901	
Engelbrecht . . .	1901	
Charles XII . . .	1901	

The Crown Bride	1902	
Swanwhite	1902	
The Dream Play	1902	Plays.
Christina	1903	
Gustavus III	1903	
The Nightingale in Wittenberg	1903	
Fairhaven and Foulstrand (Partly autobiographical.)	1902	Stories.
Sagas	1903	
Alone	1903	Meditative Autobiography.
The Gothic Rooms	1904	Novel.
Word-Play and Handicraft		Poems.
The Conscious Will in the History of the World		Historical.
*A Free Norway**		

(* *To be published for the first time.*)

Historical Miniatures	1905	Stories in Historical Setting.
New Swedish Adventures	1906	
Black Flags	1907	Novel.
A Blue Book. I, II, III	1907–8	The Synthetic Philosophy of Strindberg's Life.
Storm	1907	Chamber Plays.
The Burned Lot	1907	
The Spook Sonata	1907	
The Pelican	1907	
The Black Glove	1909	
The Festival of the Finished Building	1907	Stories.
The Scapegoat	1907	

The Last Knight . . .	1908	Plays.
The Slippers of Abu Casem	1908	
The Earl of Bjälbo . . .	1909	
The National Director . .	1909	
The Great Highway . . .	1909	

"The Great Highway" is a "farewell to life and a self-declaration."

Hamlet	1908–9	Dramaturgy.
Julius Cæsar		
Memorandum to the Members of the Intimate Theatre . .		
Macbeth and Other Plays by Shakespeare . . .		
An Open Letter to the Intimate Theatre		
The Origins of our Mother Tongue	1910	Philology.
Biblical Proper Names . .	1910	
Roots of World-Languages .	1910	
Speeches to the Swedish Nation .	1910	
The State of the People . .	1910	
Religious Renaissance . .	1910	
China and Japan * . . .	1911	

Dr. John Landquist, the editor of the posthumous edition of Strindberg's collected works, has kindly placed the following note on Strindberg's manuscripts at our disposal:

"The MSS., most of which are still in existence,

* All correspondence relating to the authorisation of translations of Strindberg's works and the rights of performing his plays in England and America should be addressed to Herr Albert Bonnier, of Stockholm. He is now the sole representative of Strindberg's literary executors.

are written with the utmost care in Strindberg's clear and energetic hand, and are often beautifully ornamented. They reflect the neatness and order with which the author surrounded himself, and also the love with which he carried out his work. When writing mediæval drama, Strindberg illuminated his MSS. like a mediæval handwritten manuscript with artistically designed and coloured initial letters, and with miniatures painted by himself—the whole harmonising with the period and surroundings in which the action takes place. On other pages there is interspersed in the writing itself such ornamentation as would correspond to the time and atmosphere of the written work. As a rule he used hand-made Lessebo-paper, and generally made very few alterations. He hardly ever copied out his MSS. In later years he seldom corrected anything when once it had been written down. He did not like to read through his own works after having completed them."

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